H2 The Marshall Cavendish Learning System: History

ASIA: THE DAWN OF HISTORY

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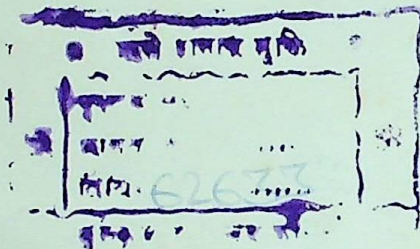
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Introduction

by Alan Bullock
Master of St Catherine's College, Oxford

IF THERE IS one thing certain about the next 50 years it is that the world is going to have to pay much more attention to Asia. More than half the world's population lives in Asia, 700 million in China, 500 million in India and more than a hundred million each in Indonesia, Pakistan and Japan. Sooner or later this huge preponderance of population is bound to affect the world balance of power, the more so since it is accompanied by a constantly growing pressure of people upon natural resources leading to explosive situations out of which revolution and war can very easily arise.

One consequence of this change will be the need to learn more about the peoples of Asia and their civilizations. For, although in economic terms, we may speak of countries like India as underdeveloped, many of these peoples (unlike the new nations of Africa) are heirs of ancient civilizations, the traditions of which powerfully affect their attitudes today. Thus Communist China, while passionately repudiating the past, none the less reproduces the pride and disdain which the Chinese throughout their history have shown towards the outside world; whilst India and Pakistan are bitterly divided by their different religious and cultural inheritances.

The chapters that follow provide an introduction to the early history of Asia, a history crowded with figures and events entirely unfamiliar to most Western readers.

We begin in South East Asia, known until a few years ago as Indo-China, a name which at once identifies the two great cultures, Indian and Chinese, which have both mingled and opposed each other

throughout its history. From the fabulous world of Angkor Wat—for once the word 'fabulous' is justified—we turn to the origins of the two great empires between which Indo-China lay—China, which dates from the conquests of Ying Chen, prince of Ch'in, between 230 and 221 BC, and India which traces its modern (as distinct from its mythical) history from the extraordinary career of another conqueror, Chandragupta Maurya, a century earlier. Much of the early history of both civilizations is taken up with violence, war and territorial conquests. These passed; what remained was the slower, more penetrating tides of religion, trade and cultural change. It was by these means, the cumulative peaceful influence of traders, monks, scholars and artists, not by force, that India effected the cultural conquest of South East Asia, fifteen hundred miles distant from the homeland of Hinduism and Buddhism. For to the north, it was the scholars of China trained in the Confucian tradition who held together and gave a cultural unity to the vast Chinese empire constantly torn apart by the bloody quarrels of rival war lords.

Finally we come to one of the most remarkable episodes in the whole of human history, the rise and fall of the Mongol Empire. Neither the Great Wall of China nor any other defences were proof against the extraordinary striking power of the Mongol horsemen. They burst into history from the arid windswept deserts of Central Asia in the early 13th century. Under Genghiz Khan they swept across China, subdued Persia and drove deep into Eastern Europe. The Mongols were notorious for their ruthlessness, yet the court of Kublai Khan who ruled China for 35 years, was famed for its culture and toleration, a fame immortalised by the Marco Polo who lived at the Mongol Emperor's court for half his reign.

All these far-off events and long dead figures may seem very remote. Yet the historical patterns which they established have continued to exercise a lasting influence on the societies which inhabit these lands today. To be a Chinese, even a revolutionary Chinese, is to belong to an historical tradition and a culture amongst the oldest and proudest in the world. Nobody who has lived or travelled in the two 'old' continents, Asia and Europe, will ever be tempted to believe that their history is irrelevant even in a time of revolution. In Asia, as in Europe, it is still true that he who would understand the present must begin with the study of the past.

Angkor wakes from her jungle sleep

What kings and craftsmen built this moated city and its man-made mountain of temples? Who then abandoned them to the clutching forest, to be rediscovered by one man's incredible luck?

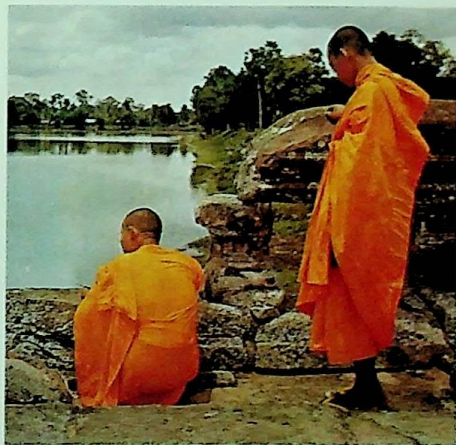
THE TROPICAL JUNGLES of southeastern Asia were unknown to Europeans 100 years ago, when the fishermen of Tonle Sap, Cambodia's *Great Lake*, were telling strange stories about vast secret temples built by the gods, where no man had ever set foot. Saffron-clad Buddhist priests were known to be slipping into the jungle to chant their monotonous prayers to the glory of the divine builders.

These tales of Cambodian fishermen and movements of a few Buddhist priests did not stir the minds of the handful of Europeans who had acquired a sketchy knowledge of Cambodia. The few French scholars living in Indo-China smiled at the credulity of those who repeated the stories, and remained profoundly sceptical.

Towers in the jungle

Suddenly, in 1860, their complacency was shattered. Henri Mouhot, a lone French naturalist, returned footsore from the jungle, excitedly describing a vast moated temple which was gradually but inexorably being swallowed up by the remorseless forest. He had found Angkor Wat, a still splendid building of fantastic size and complexity, lost to civilization for more than four centuries – the central shrine of the bygone empire of the Khmers.

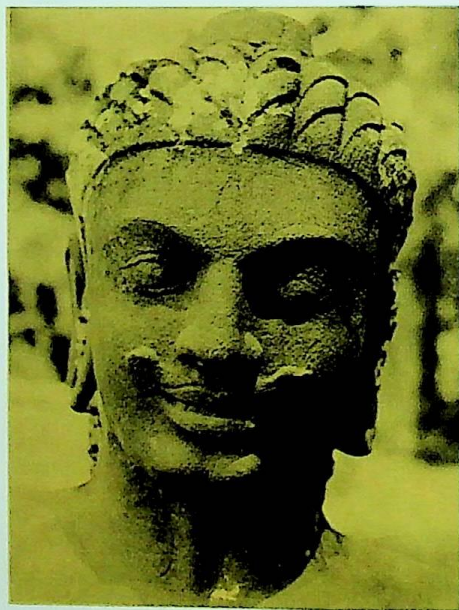
The moat which enclosed the outer buildings of Angkor Wat formed an exact square with sides a mile long. Inside this

Today saffron-robed Buddhist priests come to pray at the temple of Angkor Wat.

The Angkor Wat moat whose waters reflect the five peaks of this man-made mountain, home of the Hindu gods.

Statue, *below,* from Angkor Thom, named 'the leper king' because of the odd blemishes on its face.

enclosure was another square with sides half a mile long. In the centre of the squares, on a square terrace, stood the inner sanctuary, a pyramid temple with five central towers capped by bursting lotus buds, symbolic of life and fertility. A similar tower rose from each corner of the terrace, making nine in all. The central tower soared more than 200 feet skywards, subduing the threatening jungle.

As Henri Mouhot tramped across the causeway that spanned the moat, he saw before him miles of finely sculptured stairways, corridors, chambers, galleries and shrines. Acres of Angkor Wat's many walls were covered with a myriad scenes, illustrating mainly the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, two great epics of the brilliant culture of ancient India.

In time other French scholars sought the secrets of the Khmers. Their joint efforts uncovered from the jungle many cities, temples and monuments within the area of present-day Cambodia, eastern Thailand, southern Laos and Vietnam. Near to Angkor Wat they discovered the once-mighty city of Angkor Thom, which in its day housed perhaps several hundred thousand inhabitants. A moat and a wall enclosed a city area of about five square miles. Five causeways gave access to the city centre through gateways leading into

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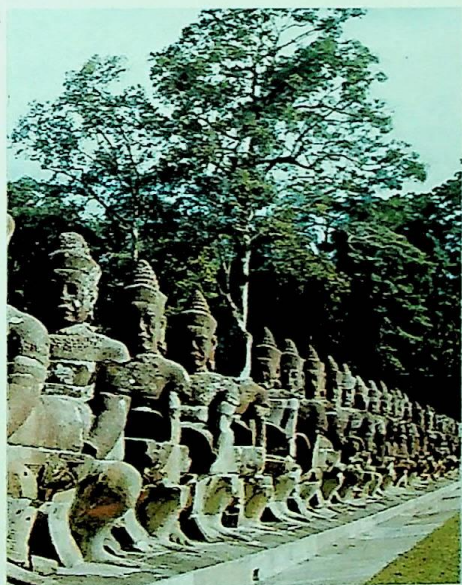
Much remains of the 'great city', Angkor Thom, **1**, including a causeway, **2**, where gods and demons still churn ambrosia, symbol of prosperity, for the god-king's people.

2

avenues lined, on both sides, with gods and demons standing in file, to support on their knees an immensely long *naga* (divine snake) whose several heads rose in a monstrous fan at each end of the body. Apparently engaged in some colossal tug-of-war, the figures were acting out a scene from Hindu mythology which was much loved by the Khmers – the churning of ambrosia *(soma)* from an ocean of milk, using the serpent, twisted round a mountain, for the churning process. To the Khmers, the ambrosia represented health, prosperity and happiness – all symbolized for them in the faces of their king carved on the gateway towers.

At the city centre stood the Bayon, after Angkor Wat the largest temple at Angkor. The Bayon was a vast mass of sculptured terraces topped by 50 four-sided towers, similar to those at the gates. Carved on each side of each tower was the serene, half-smiling face of Lokeswara – the god-king Jayavarman VII in the form of a *boddhisattva*, a perfect being who has renounced his own Buddhahood in order to stay on Earth and help others.

What was the secret of this lost civilization? How did Hindu and Buddhist deities come to be personified in remote jungles 2,000 miles east of India? What was the significance of the man-made mountain of temples with its 200 images of the god-king? How did these magnificent buildings come to be abandoned to the jungle? For more than 100 years French and other scholars have been seeking answers to these questions. Despite the knowledge that they have acquired, much of Cambodia's past history is still only dimly understood. Most records of its early history come from Chinese sources.

The Chinese records tell that in the sixth century AD, the prince of Chenla, a quasi-independent state situated along the shores of the middle Mekong river, sent his armies southwards to attack his overlord, the king of Funan. For the next

Seeming to grow out of the stone, innumerable heads of the god-king who built it smile from the towers of the Bayon, central temple of the lost city of Angkor.

century or so, Chenla gradually annexed most of the territory of Funan, which disappeared from history. Chenla established northern and southern kingdoms, but southern Chenla fell to the king of Java who incorporated it into his empire.

Indra, Buddha, Siva

Towards the end of the eighth century AD, a Khmer prince freed the old land of Chenla from the Javanese, installed himself as king, and set up in turn four capitals north of Tonle Sap, west of the Mekong. He took the title Jayavarman II (there had been a Jayavarman I of Chenla in the seventh century) and founded a line of kings who ruled from the general area of Angkor for more than 600 years. Jayavarman II had lived for many years in Java and was a devotee of Javanese culture, which, like that of Funan and Chenla, sprang from the parent culture of India. Indian religion dominated south-east Asia, fusing in each area with local cults to produce a variety of hybrid religions, more or less Indian in spirit.

Although in Jayavarman II's time India was a Hindu country, it had not always been so. During the many centuries when Indian sailors and traders spread not only their wares but also their ideas to Indo-China, the Indian homeland passed through a period of great religious upheaval. From the third century BC a decadent Hinduism had to fight for survival against Buddhism, a new, reforming offshoot of itself. Later, as Buddhism declined in India, a resurgent Hinduism emerged, and some of the old gods became unfashionable. Thus at least three forms of Indian religion found their way eastwards: the old Hinduism represented by the god Indra; Buddhism; and the reformed Hinduism in which the gods Siva and Vishnu (the Preserver) were dominant. Siva, god simultaneously of destruction

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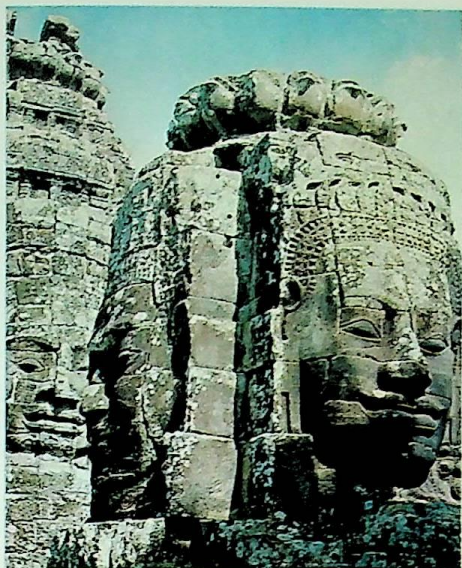
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Towers, pinnacles, dreaming stone faces, carvings serpentined over crumbling walls – the forgotten temples of the Khmers rose before the astonished eyes of a solitary French naturalist struggling through the Cambodian jungle 100 years ago. The great task of restoring them has gone on ever since. Their carvings are of an incredible richness. Jayavarman VII, last builder of Angkor, adorned his 50-towered temple of the Bayon with dancing figures, **1**, and with huge heads of himself as god-king, reassuring his people with the serenity of the Buddha,

and creation, has always been represented in India by the supreme symbol of creativeness and fertility, the *linga*, a conventionalized but barely disguised phallus.

For his fourth and final capital, Jayavarman II chose *Phnom* (hill or mountain) Kulên, situated about 60 miles northeast of Tonle Sap. He chose this site not because it was a good place for habitation, but because, like Indra, he had to live at the summit of a mountain, or at least of a hill. Jayavarman came in time to identify himself with Indra. Later in his reign, however, he brought to his capital a learned Brahman from India, who favoured the more fashionable god, Siva. The Brahman chanted the sacred Sanskrit scriptures from memory and ordered a monumental linga to be built in honour of Siva, the source of all power.

The king, having identified himself with the old god, Indra, took readily to the Brahman's reasoning that he now personified the successor god, Siva. Jayavarman became the god-king whose soul dwelt in the linga. In time the linga became identified directly with the king, and after his death it became the symbol of Khmer kingship generally. Phnom Kulên was to Jayavarman II, Mount Meru, the mytho-

An earlier temple, Banteay Srei, built in AD 968, is encrusted with scenes from Hindu myth.

The Khmers were master sculptors: a ferocious demon from the beautiful little temple of Banteay Srei.

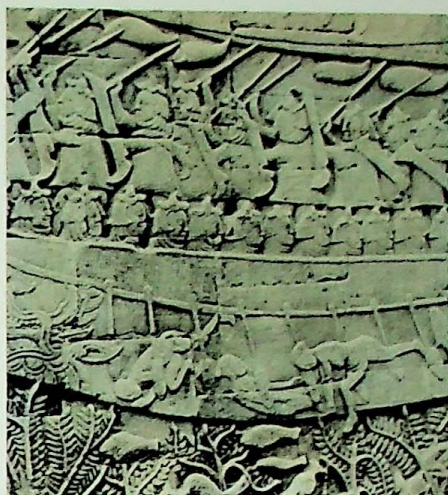
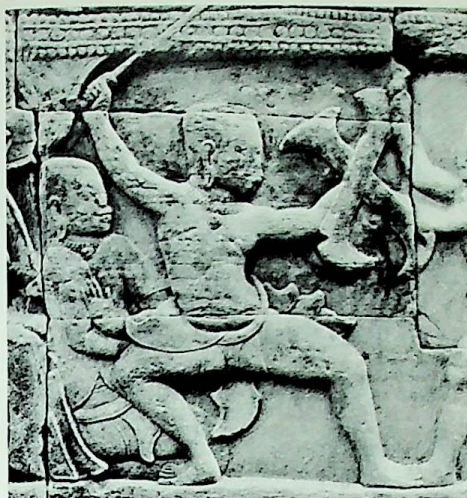
logical mountain where Siva lived. At the top of Phnom Kulên Jayavarman II built a step pyramid (a mountain upon a mountain) and at the top of this, in all probability, he housed his symbolic self – the sacred linga.

At his various capitals Jayavarman II reigned for nearly half a century, divine king of the united country of the Khmers. His successors founded other capitals, each king trying to outdo his predecessors in architectural splendour. In 944, King Rajendravarman finally established the capital at Angkor.

In 1113, the ambitious Suryavarman II began his 37-year reign, determined to win new territories for the Khmer empire. The time was favourable. To the north, the mighty Sung dynasty of China (which regarded the whole of Indo-China as its sphere of influence) was weakened by internal struggles. The Chinese were therefore unable to exert their customary heavy-handed pressure upon their 'southern barbarians'. After raiding the neighbouring kingdom of Champa (now southeastern Vietnam), Suryavarman forced its king into unwilling alliance with him against Annam (now central Vietnam), and later annexed most of Champa outright. He then extended his kingdom from the China Sea to the Indian Ocean, and toyed with the idea of becoming conqueror of the world.

King of perpetual youth

At the centre of his empire, Suryavarman built Angkor Wat. The nine great gold-capped towers of this unique temple

Khmer buildings mirror the empire's history in their decorations. *Below,* a relief from Angkor Wat shows a lord riding to war in his chariot, his driver whipping on the horses. Its graceful, dancing movement contrasts with the more earthy style of the Bayon friezes, some 50 years later: *right,* a warrior in hand-to-hand combat; *far right,* Cham spearmen, their helmets shaped like flowers, are rowed into battle against the Khmers by oarsmen crouched behind wickerwork screens. First casualties have already joined the fishes.

each represented a linga, and indeed the whole edifice was conceived as one vast linga to the glory of Suryavarman. Although as the linga Suryavarman personified Siva, he was also deified as Vishnu – evidence that in Cambodia, as in India, the twin cults of the two gods had blended, with the emphasis on Vishnu.

Jayavarman VII, son of Suryavarman's cousin, gained the throne by a stroke of luck in 1181, when he was already past 50. He became king only when the reigning king, a usurper who had taken Jayavarman's rightful inheritance, was killed by marauding Chams. Catching their old enemies in a moment of weakness, these Chams landed from the sea, pushed inland, and sacked Angkor. Jayavarman mobilized the Khmer navy and defeated the Chams in a fierce sea battle. Later he had the battle scene recorded in bas-relief in three places, including the walls of the Bayon, and on his own tomb. Jayavarman displayed the vigour of a man half his age. He again annexed Champa, and expanded the Khmer empire to its greatest extent. Chinese records tell that it included parts of the Malay peninsula and Burma.

It was not mainly as a warrior that Jayavarman VII made his fame, however, but rather as a builder. The central part of his empire was already covered with magnificent buildings constructed by his predecessors. Whether he consciously set out to build even better than they had done, or whether he wanted to expunge memories of the shameful sack of Angkor, we do not know. What is certain is, that having started to build, he found the task to his liking. Soon he was engaged in the spurt of architectural frenzy that was to build Angkor Thom with its unique, unearthly central temple, the Bayon. Like Angkor Wat and its towers, the Bayon, too, was a vast linga, and its four-faced central tower was also covered with gold. Like Angkor Wat, the richly sculptured surfaces of the Bayon were ablaze with colour. Jayavarman VII lived to be nearly 90, dying in 1215, a perpetually young, vigorous old man, ceaselessly lavishing the wealth of his empire on his latest triumph in uncemented stone. The Khmer economy, already overburdened by the wars and architectural extravagances of Suryavarman II, was ruined by the similar excesses of Jayavarman VII.

How was it that Angkor, a basically

Greedy roots of jungle trees grow over and through the ruined temple of Ta Prohm,

agricultural civilization, had ever become rich enough to sustain the architecture of its kings? The economy depended to a great extent upon the irrigation system inherited from the old kingdom of Funan. The system was basically simple: during the monsoon season the Khmers collected water into reservoirs, and in the dry season they used it for human consumption and for constant irrigation of the rice fields. Some of their *barays* (storage tanks) were immense – one had a capacity of 30 million cubic metres. From the barays, a complex system of waterways irrigated 12 million acres of paddy fields. By keeping the rice permanently watered, the farmers grew three or four crops a year.

The irrigation system protected the soil against erosion by controlling floods. So wide were the waterways, that they were used for boats and so provided an efficient system of transport.

Upon his accession, each Khmer king was expected to extend and maintain the waterways system before building his own temples. Possibly Jayavarman VII neglected his prime duty. The neglect of the waterways system seems to have proceeded concurrently with the decline of the Khmer civilization generally. When the final attacks of their enemies came, the economy may have collapsed largely as a result of the breakdown of the waterways system.

Menace of the T'ai

Jayavarman's successor evacuated the Khmer army of occupation from Champa, which finally gained its freedom. Other subject states also gradually broke away. The western domains of the Khmers became increasingly encroached upon by the T'ai, a Chinese people who had been moving southwards along the river valleys for several centuries. Many T'ai warriors had in the past hired themselves as mercenaries to the Khmer kings, and their likenesses are recorded in the sculptured panels of Angkor Wat. In the thirteenth century, as Khmer power waned, the T'ai gradually formed a series of small states – the beginnings of present-day Thailand. In 1238 the T'ai boldly attacked a Khmer military base and annexed the north-western corner of the Khmer empire. Egged on by the all-powerful Kublai Khan, who by 1279 imposed Mongol rule over all China, the T'ai became more menacing. In 1287 the collapse of Pagan, a powerful state in Burma, relieved the T'ai of military pressure on their western flank. They annexed much of Pagan's territory and continued their expansion to the east.

From about 1350 the T'ai attacked the Khmers almost continuously. The Cham also took the opportunity to strike at their old enemies from the east. In 1431, after a seven-month siege, Angkor fell to T'ai armies. The invaders looted the city and deported its people. In the following year the Khmers rallied and expelled the T'ai. But Angkor, sacked and diminished in glory, was too exposed to T'ai raiders. In 1434 the declining Khmer dynasty set up its capital at Phnom Penh (the present capital of Cambodia) and abandoned Angkor to the jungle.

China burns her books

'History'. said the Emperor, 'begins with me.' The wisdom of China flamed under his soldiers' torches. But a long-dead philosopher, Confucius, had left a legacy which was indestructible.

IN THE third century BC the efficient military state of Ch'in defeated and crippled its neighbours Han and Wei. Having annexed much of the Han-Wei territories, Ch'in struck at Chu and Chi and further expanded its territory. Contemptuously marching through Han territory, the Ch'in armies turned against the mighty state of Chao, which threw 450,000 soldiers into the desperate defence of a threatened border town.

By a combination of intrigue and tactics the Ch'in ruler lured Chao's soldiers away from their fortifications, encircled them, and slowly starved them out. The Ch'in armies then fell upon the emaciated Chao soldiers and cut them down, putting every prisoner to the sword. The way lay open for the achievement of Ch'in's ultimate ambition. Between 230 and 221 BC Ying Cheng, Prince of Ch'in, finally annexed the remaining territories of Han, Wei, Chu, Chi and Chao; together with those of the only remaining state, Yen. The enfeebled 800-year-old Chou dynasty had finally disappeared in about 256 BC. By 221 BC Ch'in incorporated the six conquered states into a single empire that we have since called, after Ch'in, *China*.

The civilizations of Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon and Greece had already passed their zenith; Indian culture flourished; Rome was locked in its long struggle with Carthage. But to Ying Cheng, China was the world: beyond its frontiers lived only barbarians. To keep them out he constructed across northern China the Great Wall, linking earlier walls into a 3,000-mile system (allowing for the twists and turns of mountains and valleys). Ying Cheng decreed that work on the wall should never cease and that his dynasty should last for ever. He commanded that henceforth he should be titled *First Emperor* and his successors *Second*, *Third* and *Fourth Emperors*, and so on.

Advised by his Grand Councillor, Li Ssu, a scholar who had risen from poverty, the Ch'in Emperor decided that history began with himself. He set himself the task of reorganizing China and stamping out all marks of the past. Local boundaries disappeared and statues toppled, but ideas were not so easily disposed of. Stung by a scholar's criticism of his flattery of the emperor, Li Ssu retaliated by striking at

scholarship itself. In a memorandum to the emperor he observed that as the world had been unified and brought under a single law it was now the business of the common people to concentrate their efforts in agriculture and industry, while the role of scholars was to apply their intellect to law and administration. Instead of attending to their proper business, complained Li Ssu, scholars were probing into the past in order to criticize the present. This, he claimed, caused distrust and confusion in the land.

Li Ssu then came quickly to the point. 'I advise your majesty to have destroyed, all ancient records (other than those of Ch'in), and all books on poetry, history, and philosophy except those in the royal library. Furthermore, I recommend that all who recite or discuss these subjects, be executed, and that those who complain against your majesty's government, in the name of tradition should, together with their families, be beheaded.' The Ch'in Emperor accepted this advice, which was codified, issued as an imperial decree, and put into effect.

A great burning of books followed. Much of the wisdom of ancient China, preserved so carefully for generations on bamboo and wooden tablets, disappeared in smoke. Then the public executioners busied themselves, ridding China of hundreds of its greatest scholars and sages. But the

One of a handful of warring states in China's third century BC, Ch'in fought its way to supremacy over its neighbours. Its name survives, as China, today. Warriors of ancient China, such as this horseman, dealt savagely with defeated enemies.

greatest atrocity was yet to come.

It had long irked Li Ssu, a scholar of the *Legalist* school, that followers of Master K'ung, a philosopher who had died more than two and a half centuries before, commanded more influence among intellectuals than did the Legalists. The Grand Councillor therefore advised the Ch'in Emperor that the K'ung scholars were dangerous subversive men whose sly tongues could bring down his dynasty. The Emperor took little convincing: a year after the burning of the books he had 460 K'ung scholars rounded up and buried alive. That, thought the Emperor, was the end of them and their ideas!

In fact he was mistaken. The Emperor and his Grand Councillor had succeeded in destroying neither all the K'ung scholars nor their books. The philosophy that the Ch'in Emperor feared and hated was to survive his dynasty by more than 2,000 years.

Master K'ung to his pupils, Confucius to the Western world, the philosopher of ancient China, *below*, was to outlast the fury of the emperor who built the Great Wall, *right*. Imperial efforts to smash Confucianism failed absolutely.

Who were these K'ung scholars? Their history had begun more than three centuries before. In about 551 BC in the town of Tsou in eastern China there was born to the wife of an elderly minor official surnamed K'ung, a second son whom she called Ch'iu. K'ung Ch'iu grew up with a serious view of life and at 15 decided to devote his life to learning. His father had died when he was only three, his mother when he was 17. K'ung Ch'iu set up a school in his own house. His scholars called him K'ung Fu Tzu (K'ung the Master). Today he is better known in the West by his Latinized name, Confucius, and his followers are called Confucians.

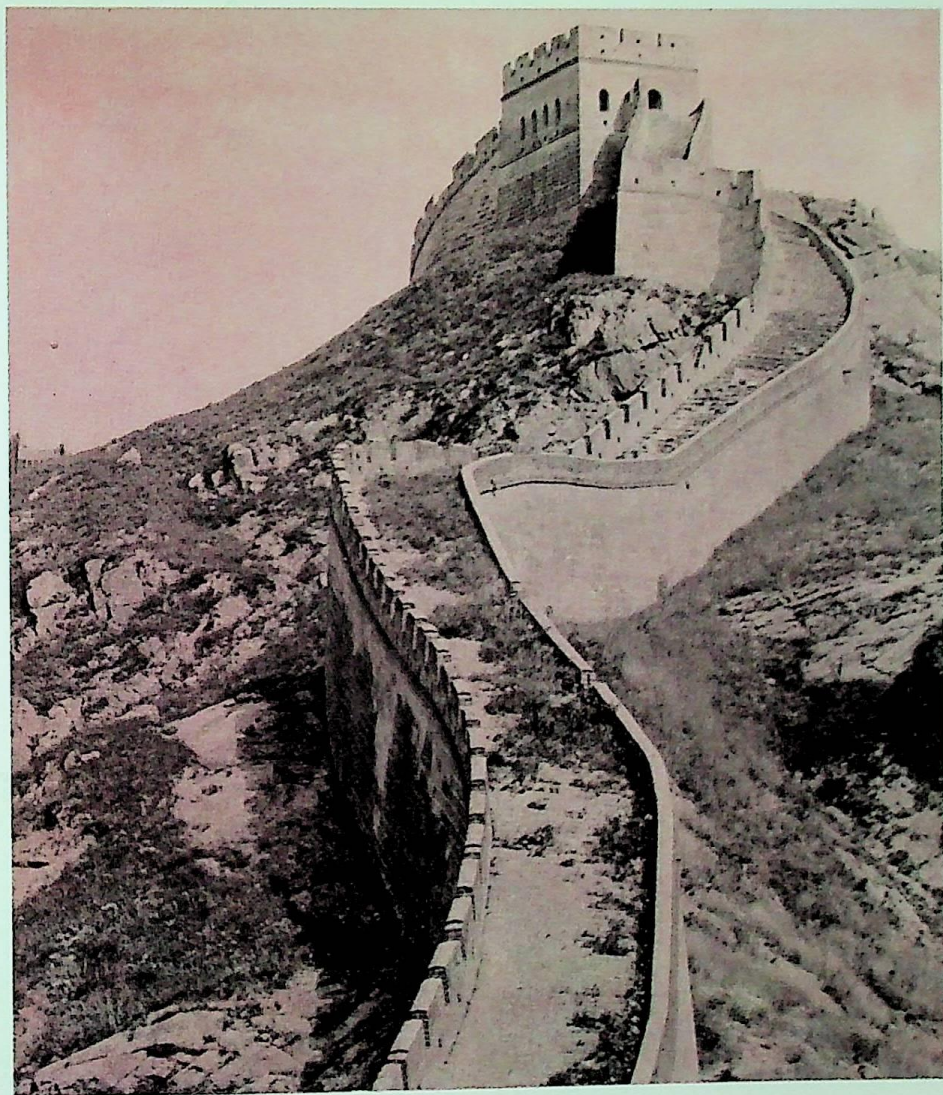
A ceremonial code

Confucius advocated the six traditional branches of learning, which were: archery, carriage driving, mathematics, writing, music and ritual. Innately conservative, Confucius was fascinated by the last of these disciplines. He believed that, as the ideally perfect society was unattainable, the next best thing was to organize social relationships through a complex code that laid down strict rules of behaviour for each kind of person.

Confucius did not accept the religious ideas of his times, and was sceptical of the supernatural. He told his scholars: 'We have not yet known life; how can we know about death?'

Confucius was the ultimate conservative. He was not so much the creator of a new system of ethics and behaviour as a systematizer of old ones. He practised *Li,* a ceremonial code of social and religious behaviour, and maintained that it was the true code for a gentleman to follow. The Li code embraced beliefs, ethics, manners, deportment, social behaviour, ceremony and statecraft. Many of the students who

came to Confucius for instruction profited so much from his teaching that they gained high places in government service. After Confucius' death in 479 BC, his students collected his sayings in the *Lun Yü (The Analects).*

It was important for a man to study, taught Confucius, not merely to gain knowledge but rather to improve his character. Learning was not an end in itself; when a man had taken the trouble to learn something, he should put it to

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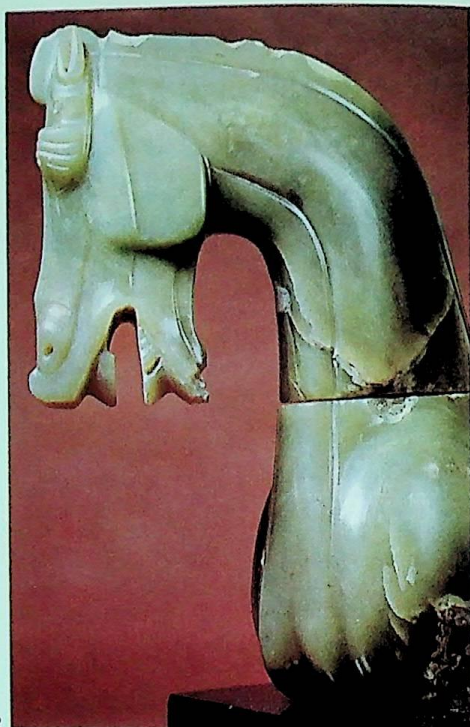
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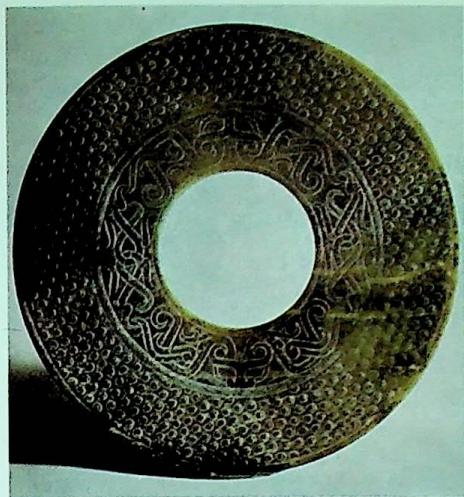

The artists and craftsmen of the country were masters of a delicate and civilized workmanship which closely reflects the values of contemporary thinkers and philosophers. **1,** this ritual vessel, created in the eighth century BC, pre-dates Confucius but shows in its formal interlacing ribbon decoration the same concern with rational processes that the philosopher shared. **2, 3 and 4,** are three carvings in jade - regarded in China as the most precious of stones. The White Tiger, **3,** carved in white jade, was a mythical beast symbolic of the West. The *pi* disc, **4,** symbolized heaven, with the sun its centre. Both artists and philosophers believed that jade has virtues closely comparable to human virtues. A dictionary of the second century AD described jade as a stone that is beautiful. 'There is warmth in its lustre and brilliancy, this is the manner of kindness... it may be broken but cannot be twisted, this is the manner of bravery.'

practical use. The man who sought the good life should be ready to learn from anyone, irrespective of whatever he ranked higher or lower socially than himself.

Confucius taught that in all things a man should be a *chüntzu* (gentleman). Whether or not a man was a chüntzu depended upon his character and his behaviour; it had nothing to do with his birth. The chüntzu would never allow his desires to deflect him from doing what he thought was right. His conduct would be prudent and cautious; neither extreme nor ostentatious. He would be known as an honest man who kept his promises and remained true to his principles. To others he would be scrupulously fair. If others refused his advice he would not lose his temper. He would in any case always strive to be calm and avoid demonstrative words or behaviour.

The chüntzu would naturally follow the rules and etiquette of *Li*. But he would observe the principle rather than the form; he would act intelligently rather than mechanically. He would meticulously observe and practise the correct rituals and ceremonies and adjust his behaviour according to what was appropriate for each class and rank of person. But he would do this not because convention demanded it, but rather because he genuinely believed that this was the best thing to do.

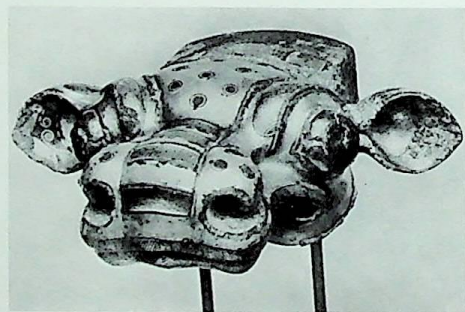
The true chüntzu would, by example, civilize and educate those he met, and persuade through his superior moral power. He would be courageous, calm and self assured, but neither pompous nor hypercritical. Whatever task he undertook he would carry out to the best of his ability. He would be a natural leader, but if none recognized his worth and he went unrewarded he would not be resentful. Such was the ideal gentleman, taught Confucius. Few could reach such perfection but all might strive towards it.

Besides propagating his ideas by teaching, Confucius turned to writing. Ever a lover of the past, which he tended to idealize as a golden age, he revised and edited a book of history, *Spring and Autumn Annals*. He probably also edited a collection of earlier writings: the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of*

Songs and the *Book of Rites*. These four books and the *Annals* are still known to the Chinese as 'The Five Classics'. It was two of these classics, the *Book of History* and the *Book of Songs* which incurred the special wrath of the Ch'in Emperor nearly three centuries later.

In propagating the good life and pushing forward his views on how rulers should go about their business, Confucius cared less for power than for doing what he thought was right. He filled with distinction various government posts in Lu, his home state, including that of magistrate and Minister of Justice. His fame spread and he travelled far and wide for about 13 years, but never gained a post of great power. Not everyone agreed with his views.

One tale about Confucius – possibly no more than a legend – tells how he once met Lao-tzu. This sage (whom some scholars regard as a mythical character) is the reputed founder of *Taoism,* which alongside Confucianism has been a Chinese religion and philosophy for about 2,500 years. According to the story, Lao-tzu, the older of the two sages, thought very little of Confucius. The old man upbraided Confucius for harping on the past, expressed his disbelief in the virtues of learning and advised him to stop meddling in other people's affairs.

After the death of Confucius in 479 BC, his fame spread; his followers grew in number and influence and modified his doctrines. The greatest disciple of Confucius, Meng K'o (*c.* 370–*c.* 290 BC), better known by his Latinized name, *Mencius,* expounded Confucianism about 200 years after the death of Confucius. Although he had advised against ostentatious behaviour, Confucius had never been a puritan and he abhorred asceticism. Not so Mo Ti, a peasant philosopher born at about the time that Confucius died. Mo Ti also drew his inspiration from the past, but despised the ceremony-loving Confucianites. Mo Ti championed the cause of the peasants and puritanically stressed the virtues of hard work. He also stressed the ideal of universal love. If everyone loved others as himself, taught Mo Ti, the troubles of society would disappear. He strongly opposed the ceremonial pomp of

While the Han dynasty ruled in China, from 206 BC to AD 220, Confucian scholars were influential both in government and education. The bronze bear, *top,* and warrior leading a bullock cart, *below,* date from this period. Simple and clear-cut art forms characterize the epoch, in contrast to the more magical quality of bronze work of the fourth century BC, from which the bull's head, *below left,* derives.

the Confucians.

Another of the many schools of philosophy that flourished in China between the sixth and third centuries BC was the *Legalist* school, of which mention has already been made. The Legalists rejected both the moral standards of the Confucianists and the democratic leanings of the Mohists (followers of Mo Ti's doctrines). The Legalists believed that power should be exercised by a strong man – a benevolent and efficient dictator who would rule with a rod of iron. To Legalists like Li Ssu, Grand Councillor of the Ch'in Empire, the First Emperor was the ideal ruler, whose dynasty should last for ever.

The Ch'in despotism tore the peasants from their farms and families and sent hundreds of thousands of them to build the Great Wall and to construct new military roads. Other peasants slaved at building the Emperor a sumptuous palace, one floor of which could hold 10,000 people. Still more conscripts, organized into gangs like convicts, sweated at constructing for the Emperor, a magnificent tomb 500 feet high and 1½ miles in circumference. Hatred of the régime grew.

Fall of the Ch'in Empire

In 209 BC, during the reign of the Second Emperor, 900 conscript soldiers bound for the frontier to take up general duties, found their route blocked by floods. To be late in reaching their destination would bring the punishment of death. In desperation they killed their commander and raised the cry of revolt against tyranny. The revolution spread like wildfire from province to province as peasants armed themselves with sharpened bamboo sticks and joined the fight. Three years later the capital of the mighty Ch'in Empire fell to soldiers led by Liu Pang, a junior official. In 202 BC Liu Pang took the title of Eminent Emperor, and became first Emperor of the Han dynasty which was to last more than 400 years.

The tragedy of the burning of the books at the orders of Li Ssu and the Ch'in Emperor had an even more disastrous sequel. When Liu Pang's peasant armies stormed the Ch'in capital, the royal library – the only surviving complete collection of China's ancient classics – caught fire. It burned for three months and all its treasures perished.

The first Han Emperor was a man of action who came from an illiterate family. He had scant respect for the pedantry and ceremonies of the Li scholars and – so the records tell – showed his contempt by urinating in their high hats. But, conqueror though he was, Liu Pang could not govern an empire competently. Nor could his quarrelsome, uneducated soldier-ministers. The Han Emperor soon found himself obliged to call in the Confucians to establish a court procedure. Their success in doing this ensured a stable government; as a result they came back into favour.

Emperors of the T'ang dynasty (AD 618–907) built temples for the worship of Confucius. Even the Manchu emperors, last rulers of China, publicly worshipped Confucius as a god. When their empire collapsed in 1911, his cult went into decline.

Ancient India's modern king

A youthful Greek conqueror, a magnificent Eastern monarch and an Indian philosopher who anticipated Machiavelli all combined to produce a truly great civilization of the ancient world.

IN 330 BC, Alexander the Great, king of the ancient Greek land of Macedonia, finally defeated the mighty empire of Persia and annexed it to his own domains. Fired with the ambition of further conquest, he turned eastwards into Parthia, Bactria, Sogdiana (Bokhara), and finally, India. In 326 BC his troops crossed the river Indus into the Punjab.

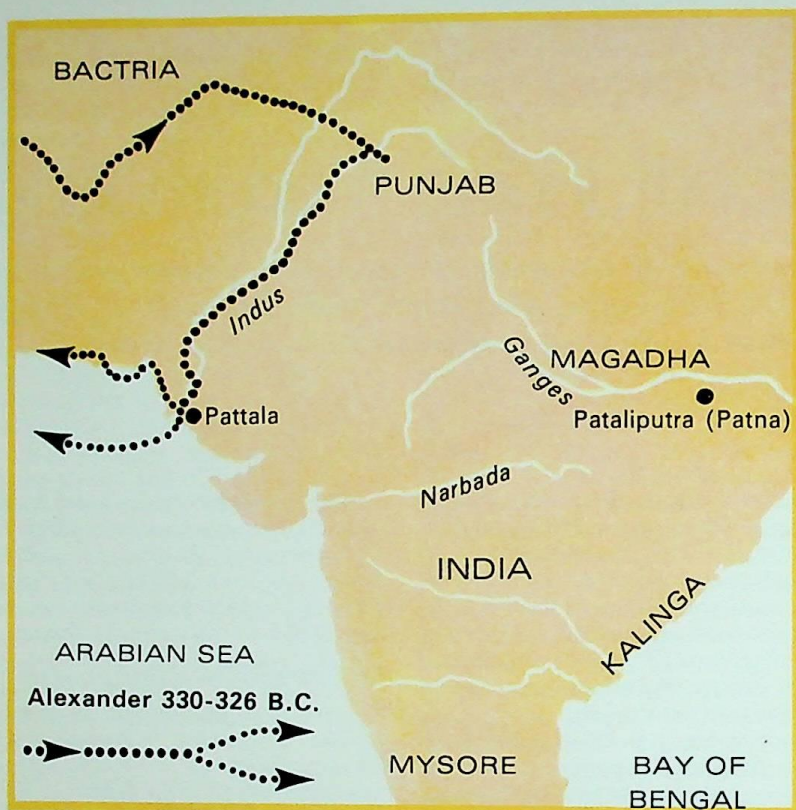
For four years (330–326 BC) his army marched through unknown mountains and deserts, braving burning heat, biting snow and disastrous floods, fighting fiercely all the way. The young conqueror would have pushed further eastwards, perhaps to China or south-eastern Asia, but in the Punjab his own troops forced Alexander to halt. The Macedonian army then returned to the Indus, and leaving garrisons behind, followed the river southwards to Pattala, near the Indian Ocean. There, the Macedonian army split into two. Part of its forces put to sea and sailed to the Persian Gulf. The main body marched back across the mountains of Persia. The two forces linked near Susa, the old Persian capital, and pressed on to Babylon. There, in 323 BC, at the age of only 33 and at the height of his power, Alexander died of malaria.

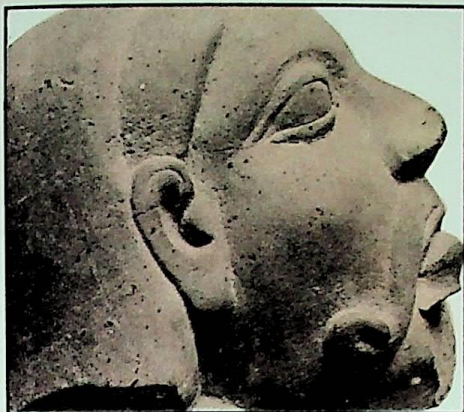
The departure of Alexander from India caused a power vacuum into which stepped Chandragupta Maurya, an adventurer from a low-caste family. From the time of Chandragupta, a reasonably reliable history of India begins to take shape.

Chandragupta gains power

According to the works of Greek and Roman historians, including Plutarch, Chandragupta as a youth helped the Macedonians in their invasion of India, but later spoke too boldly to Alexander, who ordered him to be put to death. The story continues that Chandragupta escaped and mustered an army which drove the remaining Greek garrisons out of India. In about 321 BC, Chandragupta defeated the Nandas, a dynasty which ruled the state of Magadha in modern Bihar, and captured their capital of Pataliputra (now Patna). Soon, Chandragupta brought most of northern India under his control, and he went on to capture state after state as far as the Narbada river.

In about 305 BC, when Seleucus Nicator, the Macedonian governor of Babylon, crossed the Indus from Bactria, Chandragupta met and fought him with a vast army. Some sources say that Chand-

ragupta mustered 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 war elephants and many chariots. Chandragupta seems to have got the best of the encounter, but the affair ended amicably. Seleucus ceded parts of present-day Afghanistan to Chandragupta in exchange for 500 elephants, and later Chandragupta married a Macedonian woman who may have been Seleucus' daughter. In all these adventures and achievements Chandragupta was assisted and advised by his minister, Kautilya, a shrewd brahman often called 'the Machiavelli of India'.

Kautilya, it is said, had deserted Pataliputra after being insulted by the Nanda king. Kautilya is believed to be the author of the *Arthasastra* (Manual of Politics), a treatise instructing a would-be king how to gain and hold power. The *Arthasastra* reads strangely like Machiavelli's *Prince,* which was written about 1,800 years later. The man who aspires to be king, advised Kautilya (if indeed he was the original author) should always act according to what is expedient in particular circumstances. He should not consider himself bound by the prevailing moral code. Kautilya laid down in detail the discipline that an efficient king should follow. The king, he said, should be energetic. His subjects would then respond to his example by being energetic in turn.

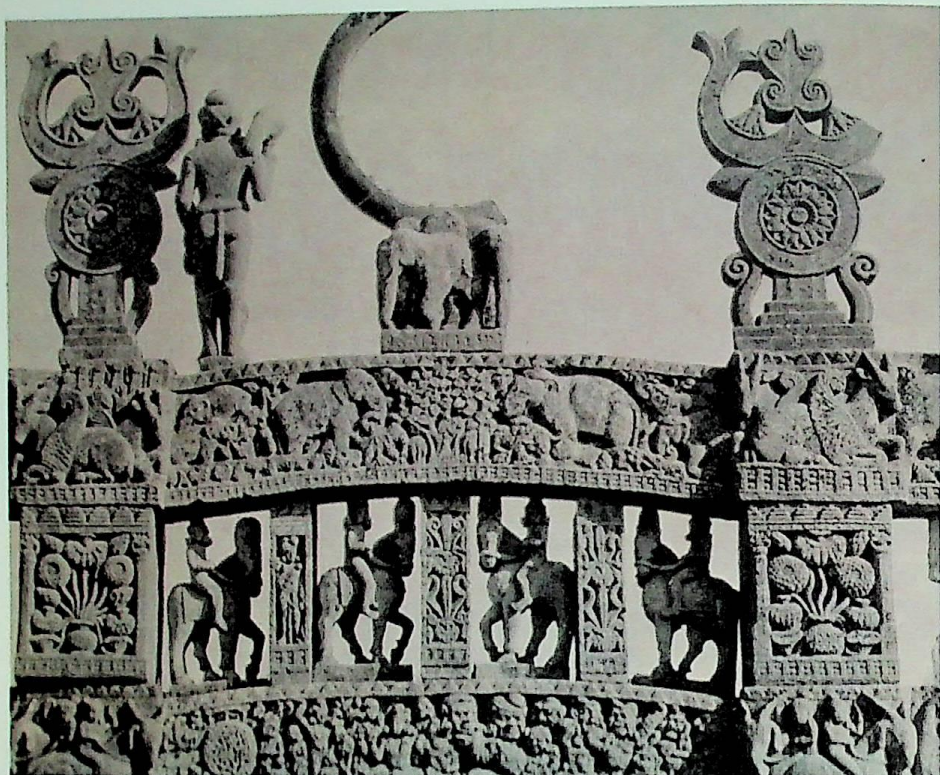
The *Arthasastra* laid down a strict code

Alexander the Great's invasion of the Punjab and his subsequent retreat, *left*, laid the groundwork for an indigenous empire. The sandstone statues, *above and below*, date from this period.

of conduct for the king, including a timetable of how he should spend his time. The king's day should begin with a visit from the priest. The king should allot one and a half hours to religious observances, three hours for bathing, taking meals and private study, and four and a half hours for sleep. If he so wished, the king should spend up to an hour and a half in recreation, and the remainder of his time should be given to affairs of state. His day should end with evening prayers.

India – land of villages

Much of our knowledge of Chandragupta's India comes from fragments of accounts left by Megasthenes, Seleucus' ambassador at Chandragupta's court. Unfortunately only parts of Megasthenes' records are now known. Contemporary Indian accounts, particularly dates, are not very reliable. All accounts suggest, however, that Chandragupta's government was very efficient for the times, even though the king ruled despotically and his officials could not be cured of corruption.

Many of the tasks that Chandragupta's government tackled parallel administrative problems faced by India's present government. Then as now, India was a land of villages, each with its headman and *panchayat* (council of elders). Officials of the central government supervised groups of villages and organized irrigation systems. The government built new villages in remote areas in order to bring about a more balanced distribution of the population. It also stockpiled food to give relief in times of famine. Farmers paid taxes to the central government, and provided most of its income.

Pataliputra, the capital, was run by a board of 30 members which enforced strict regulations to control social and economic life. The city had administrative departments for finance, harbours, public buildings, sanitation and water supply. City officials carried out censuses, kept records of property dealings and ownership, and generally busied themselves with the tasks of government much as local government officials do today. As

The North Torana, sculpted sometime between the second century BC and the first century AD, is a remarkable example of how the techniques of the woodcarver can be applied to solid stone. The work is covered with reliefs and sculptures in the round. The North Torana stands at Sanchi.

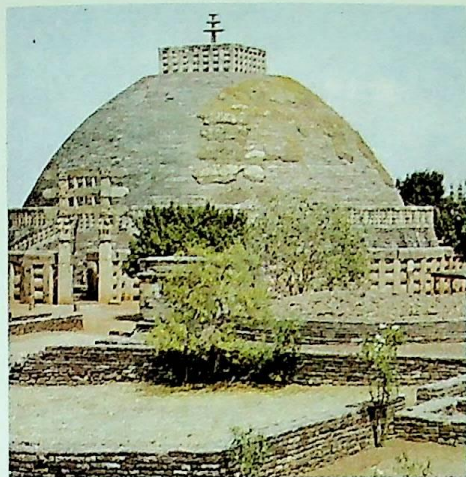
Indian houses and public buildings were constructed almost entirely of wood, fires broke out frequently. To guard against this hazard, officials enforced elaborate fire precautions. They kept water containers in the streets and forced householders to keep fire-fighting appliances ready in their houses. People who littered or dirtied the streets were liable to be fined. The government officials issued coin money and levied a five-per-cent tax on gambling, which was permitted at hotels and inns. Its officials collected heavy taxes which paid the costs of administration and supported Chandragupta's large standing army.

The *Arthasastra* laid down rules of military strategy and tactics, and several other books were written on the art of war. The ministry of defence had various departments to control the infantry, the cavalry, the elephants, the chariots, the navy, supply and so on. It was laid down that the lives of prisoners captured in war should be spared.

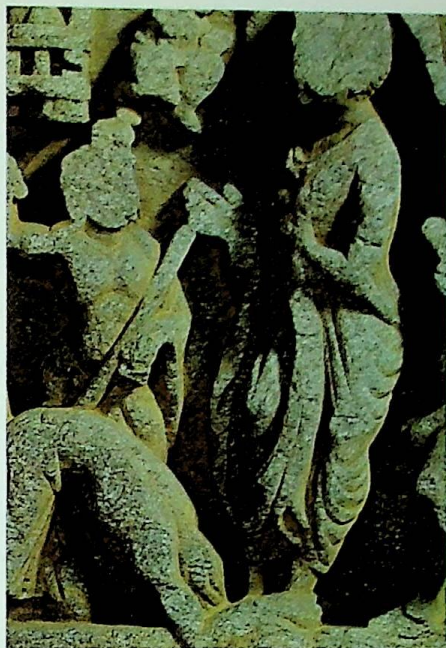
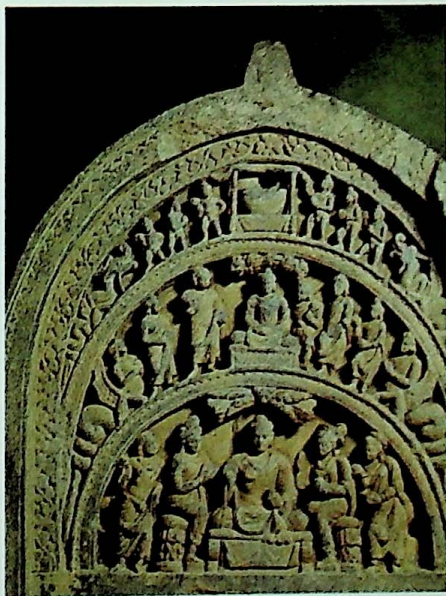
Patterns of administration

Chandragupta's engineers and surveyors constructed and maintained roads and canals. They surveyed land and

1

2

The history, thought and culture of a people is often more expressively revealed through its art than by any other means. As in the West, themes of religious worship and awe for the king permeate Indian art. Among the architectural forms adopted by the Buddhists was the *stupa* **1**, which served as a storehouse for religious relics and was designed to represent the cosmic mountain, the pivot of the world. This stupa, located at Sanchi, is known for the exceptional beauty of its sculptures and *torana,* or gateways. The partially destroyed relief **2** is representative of the Gandhara school, and depicts the future Buddha as a student. Before him a worshipper prostrates himself. The themes depicted by the pediment of the Gandhara school **3** are obviously Indian, but the influence of Hellenistic concepts in a work produced hundreds of years later shows the role played by Alexander in the creation of an Indian empire.

3

erected signposts and distance indicators. Like the Achaemenian kings of Persia (whose dynasty was destroyed by Alexander the Great) Chandragupta had his own Royal Road constructed. This highway linked Pataliputra with the northwestern outposts of his empire. A special task of the administrators was to supervise and regulate occupations bound up

with the land, such as mining, tree-felling and woodworking.

Justice was efficiently dispensed, consistent with Kautilya's doctrine that none should be allowed to oppress the people except the king himself. Chandragupta often judged cases personally, and by all accounts his judgements were generally fair. The law punished serious crimes with death or mutilation. But corruption was widespread in the administration and so firmly rooted that it baffled even the intelligence of Kautilya, who confessed himself unable to prevent it.

Rice was the staple food, and rice beer was a popular drink on festive occasions, when a little drunkenness was socially acceptable. Meat was eaten in Chandragupta's India to a far greater extent than it is today. Even brahmins ate meat, but not the flesh of horned cattle. According to Megasthenes, a caste system based on occupations had already formed, but it was more fluid, less set, than it later became.

Although Chandragupta seems to have profited by Kautilya's advice in statecraft, the king certainly did not live a life of austerity. Megasthenes recorded that Chandragupta's palace, set in an ornamental park, was more magnificent than the most splendid palaces of Persia. The king's palace, like all early buildings of northern India, was built of wood, so no part of it survives. The king loved the company of women. He kept a plentiful harem, and teams of girls danced and played music for his entertainment. Slave girls prepared and served his food and drink and attended to his every whim. Other slave girls humoured him by perpetually massaging his body with ebony rollers while he attended to affairs of state and received officials and ambassadors. Tough, trained women guards protected his palace.

When the king went hunting, mounted on an elephant and dressed in splendid clothes, he was inevitably accompanied by teams of women attendants. Soldiers escorted the royal procession and drummers gave warning of its approach. The route was cleared and cordoned off in advance of the royal party and any people who strayed in the king's path risked the punishment of death. Gladiatorial contests were staged for his amusement, and bulls, elephants and rhinoceroses were set to fight for the entertainment of the king and his court.

Peace under despotism

Under the despotic but efficient rule of Chandragupta and Kautilya, India prospered and enjoyed comparative peace. The king employed agents to spy on his officials and report to him any suspicions they had of disloyalty or corruption on the part of his administrators. Chandragupta ruthlessly punished those suspected of disobeying his will. Not surprisingly, he made many enemies. He took elaborate precautions against assassination. Official tasters tested his food and wine against poison and it is said that he changed his bedroom every night to avoid being murdered in his sleep.

In the time of Chandragupta and his immediate successors India passed through a period of great religious experiment. Hinduism, already very old, was challenged by three vigorous sects: Jains, Ajivikas and Buddhists. These three sects stemmed from the doctrine of three great teachers who lived about 300 years before Chandragupta's reign: Mahavira, Gosala Maskariputra and Siddhartha Gautama, called the *Buddha* (Enlightened One). The three sects came to possess great influence during the period of the Maurya dynasty.

The Jains, who believed their religion to be extremely old, held that time was divided into immensely long eras, and that in each era 24 perfect beings, called *Tirthankaras*, or *Jinas*, appeared on Earth.

According to Jain tradition, Mahavira (Great Soul), who lived between about 599 and 527 BC, was the 24th Tirthankara of the present era. The Jains opposed all

The Lion Capital of Asoka surmounted a column on which was carved an edict of the emperor. The lions may have had a religious significance as well as being symbols of royal power.

kinds of killing, lived as ascetics, and renounced unnecessary material possessions to the point of abandoning clothing in favour of nudity. They became very strong in eastern India, and Chandragupta himself became a Jain. Towards the end of his reign, so many Jains had withdrawn from society to live in monasteries that the starving people of India could no longer support them. The Jain monks therefore moved south, possibly led by Chandragupta himself, and established themselves at Sravana Belgola in Mysore. This place became a great shrine of Jainism and remains so to this day. It is known to many visitors by the massive image of a Jain saint, cut from rock in the tenth century AD. According to Jain tradition, Chandragupta died a penitent at Sravana Belgola, slowly starving himself to death (in 298 BC) as was the custom of Jain saints.

Figs, wine and a sophist

The Ajivikas also became prominent in Maurya times. Their leader, Gosala Maskariputra (who died about 484 BC), was a contemporary of both Mahavira and the Buddha. Ajivikas and Jains had much in common. Both sects believed that their religions dated from extremely ancient times. Both practised asceticism and nudity. The Ajivikas were complete determinists who believed that nothing could alter the course of destiny. They therefore disagreed profoundly with Hindus who believed that a man's deeds in this life determined the shape and circumstances of his next life on Earth. If the Ajivikas recorded their belief and doctrines, none of their scriptures have survived. Unlike the Jains, the Ajivikas did not flourish for long. After Maurya times they survived in a small area of eastern Mysore, but disappeared in the fourteenth century AD.

When Chandragupta died he was succeeded in 298 BC by his son, Bindusara. Little is known for certain about this king, but according to Athenaeus (a Greek writer) he once requested from Antiochus I, the Greek king of Syria, gifts of figs, wine and a *sophist* (Greek philosopher-teacher). The story tells that Bindusara received his wine and figs, but Antiochus did not send a sophist. The tale suggests that Bindusara, like other kings of the Mauryan dynasty, wished to keep up with the philosophies of the time. Bindusara extended the Maurya empire further into southern India, and Tamil poets refer to his chariots speeding across the land with white pennants reflecting the rays of the sun. Most of southern India surrendered to Bindusara without a fight.

At Bindusara's death in 272 BC, his son Asoka became king and began the conquest of Kalinga (now Andhra Pradesh and Orissa) in eastern India. According to Asoka himself, he killed 100,000 Kalingans, deported 150,000 and brought about the death of hundreds of thousands of others. The terrible carnage finally struck the king with remorse. In expiation of his crimes he turned to meditation, and within three years became a zealous Buddhist. The transformation of this remarkable king from ruthless warlord to near-pacifist is one of the strangest events in history. Asoka became the ideal philosopher-king. His domains included parts of present-day Afghanistan and most of Pakistan and India (except the extreme south). Until his death in 232 BC the vast empire was governed according to the doctrines of Buddhism – the most influential of India's non-Hindu religions and philosophies. In his reign, a highly important council was held in Pataliputra to define the exact beliefs of Buddhism, and the first stirrings of Buddhist missionary activity are recorded at this time.

After Asoka, the empire of the Maurya kings began to break up; finally, the commander-in-chief of the last Maurya assassinated his master in 185 BC, to found a dynasty of his own.

India's cultural conquest

No armies, no colonizers were sent to South East Asia by India but right across the region her faiths and arts took root. It was a peaceful revolution, the work of traders, monks and scholars.

TRAVEL 1,500 MILES eastwards from India into the lands of South East Asia. These are the countries and islands which India never took by force but which show evidence of how vigorously her arts and religious faiths took root. In Thailand, the *Khon*, a classic dance accompanied by a recitation of the *Ramakien*, the Thai version of the story of the Indian god-hero Rama, is still performed. In the Buddhist temples the fairy-like walls are carved with gilded eagles with human bodies, representing Garuda, messenger of the Indian god Vishnu. In Cambodia the walls of the vast ruins of Angkor are covered with sculptures of Indian myths and legends. In Java the massive temple of Borobudur is carved with scenes from the Indian *Jataka Tales* – stories of the Buddha's many lives on Earth. On the island of Bali, 10,000 temples are dedicated to a localized form of Hinduism. How this vast area was so influenced by India is a mystery which historians are still at work

Two girls wear the elaborate costumes and traditional head-dresses of Thailand's classical dances. The graceful poses and hand movements show the influence of India.

Garuda, messenger of the Indian god Vishnu, is portrayed as a gilded eagle with a human body. It stands in front of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok, Thailand.

on. Only dimly is the pattern of this important but neglected episode in history now beginning to emerge.

'Lands of gold'

The *Ramayana*, which is more than 2,000 years old, refers to a 'gold land with water on both sides', and both this epic and India's sacred *Puranas* mention a 'barley land with water on both sides'. It is now thought likely that the 'land of gold' to which India's traders were sailing about 2,300 years ago were Burma and Malaya. Apart from gold, the Indians sought tin and offered trinkets in exchange. Indian trade in the area was part of a much larger trading system which operated between the Mediterranean and Indonesia. Although Indian seamen dominated this trade, Malay-Indonesian sailors were also very active at this time, and almost certainly had an important share in the trade. Beads and glassware made in the Mediterranean area became fairly common in what is now Vietnam as early as the third century BC, and in the first and second centuries AD Roman beads found their way to Johore in Malaya and elsewhere in the area.

A geographical work compiled by the cartographer Ptolemy of Alexandria in about 165 AD and subsequently translated and revised by a Byzantine scholar, located several ports in southeastern Asia. The information given in this work corresponded fairly closely with descriptions found in Indian literature. The *Jataka Tales* and other legends, for example, tell of journeyings to *Suvarnabhumi* (probably Burina), indicating that this place was an 'Eldorado' in southeastern Asia.

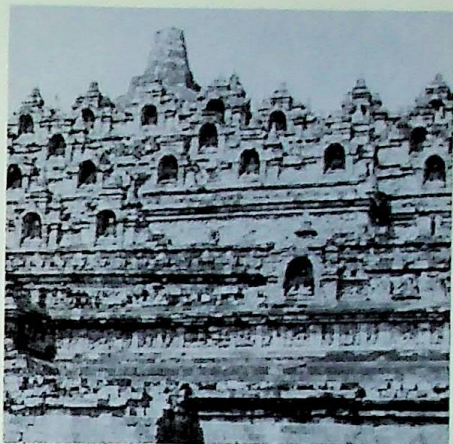
Why did the Indian traders sail eastwards? Some scholars suggest that in the last two or three centuries BC, India lost its traditional sources of supply of precious metals when nomadic tribes cut the trade route northwards from India through Bactria to Siberia. They think that Indian

merchants looked to South East Asia as an alternative source of supply. But is it likely that sailors could have disseminated the complex culture of India so thoroughly? Most experts now believe that the Indianization of South East Asia was accomplished by Indian Brahmans (Hindu priests), invited to South East Asian courts by rulers whose interest was aroused by the accounts of Indian civilization given by Indian and Indonesian sailors.

Much of the scanty information available comes from Chinese records. According to these an Indianized kingdom, Funan, was founded in Cambodia in the first century AD by Kaundinya, a Brahman called *King of the Mountain*. Chinese records refer to several Brahmans by name. Some of these appear to have founded royal lines between about the second and fourth centuries, as in Champa, a state near Funan. The likenesses of Hindu gods, particularly Siva and Vishnu, together with the Buddha, began to appear in scattered places throughout the area, fused or modified in form by local religious ideas.

Trade and honours

I-tsing, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim *en route* for India, called at Sumatra in 671 and mentioned two states: Malayu (near present-day Jambi) and Srivijaya. He spent six months at Srivijaya – already a centre of learning for Mahayana Buddhism – and there studied Sanskrit grammar. I-tsing recorded that more than 1,000 Buddhist monks lived at Srivijaya, observing the same rules and ceremonies as were practised in India. In 685 he returned to Sumatra from India to do further research and recorded the information that Srivijaya had absorbed Malayu. Srivijaya, a maritime power, was already expanding into nearby peninsulas and islands and sending armed forces to attack the kingdoms of Java.

Unlike the Chinese, whose scholars

The Borobudur, a huge Buddhist temple near Jogjakata in Java, was built by Sailendra kings at the end of the eighth century. Basically Indian in design, the Javanese builders stamped it with their own distinctive style.

The bas-reliefs on the terraces, which extend for three miles, on the Borobudur illustrate scenes from the lives of the Buddha.

meticulously recorded all that they saw and heard, the Indians and Indonesians of the period kept few reliable written records. Consequently little is known about Srivijaya during the century following I-tsing's visit, except from diplomatic records kept by the Chinese. These describe how the king of Srivijaya sent dwarfs, musicians and brightly coloured parrots as gifts to the Chinese emperor, who was pleased to confer honours and titles on the king.

By 775, Srivijaya, under a king of the Sailendra dynasty, apparently held much of the Malay peninsula which, under Srivijaya's influence, had been won for Mahayana Buddhism. Several kingdoms rose, flourished and passed away on the island of Java, and parts of the island were under Srivijaya's control from time to time.

Towards the end of the eighth century a huge Buddhist temple, the Borobudur, was built in central Java, near the present-day city of Jogjakarta. This vast temple, built in the form of a *stupa* (Buddhist burial mound), stands 150 feet high. Its highly sculptured galleries, terrace by terrace, extend for three miles, circling the

The *Wayang Orang,* a drama set to music, based on ancient Indian Hindu legends, is performed in classical costumes in Java.

This immense smiling Buddha reclines at the old capital of Thailand, Ayudhya. It was built of cement on bricks and has the marks and signs by which a true Buddha is recognized.

mound nine times. It has no interior. Thousands of bas-reliefs illustrate the Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, particularly the lives of the Buddha. The three top terraces contain about 400 statues of the Buddha beneath bell-shaped coverings. Borobudur was built by the Sailendra kings of Java who, like the Khmer kings of Cambodia, covered their country with temples and shrines containing miles of stone carvings. The vastness and architectural grandeur of these monuments bear witness to the advanced civilization which must have existed in Java about 1,200 years ago. Although the monuments were basically Indian, the Javanese builders stamped their own unique style on them.

The bas-reliefs around the base of the Borobudur were – mysteriously – covered by stone walls. The Japanese, who occupied Java between 1942 and 1945, uncovered part of these bas-reliefs and found that they illustrated the results of good and evil deeds in life, which determine *karma* (fate). Why were the fine carvings executed only to be covered up? One scholar gives a possible explanation. He suggests that the complete name of Borobudur was *Bhumisambarabhudhara*, meaning 'the Mountain of Accumulation of Virtue on the Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva', and that the base of the temple represented the first stage. The aim of the Sailendra King Indra was to become a *bodhisattva* (a near-Buddha who elects to remain on Earth), and the 'first stage' was reserved for him; it would be uncovered when the king reached the desired spiritual condition. The ideas behind this

are probably very old, stemming from ancestor worship rather than Buddhism.

Siva replaces Buddha

To the north of Java's Buddhist Sailendra kingdom lay the Sanjaya kingdom, whose smaller, less spectacular temples were dedicated to the Hindu cult of Siva. The Sanjaya kings, who were to some extent under the suzerainty of the Sailendras, gained their freedom by 856. Not only were the Sailendras finally overwhelmed by the Sanjayas, but Buddhism in central Java was replaced by the cult of Siva, the event being marked by the construction of *lingas* (stylized phallic symbols) in the Hindu fashion. The last Sailendra king of central Java, Balaputradeva, when defeated and driven off the island, crossed to Sumatra. By means now quite unknown, he became king of Srivijaya – possibly he had a claim through blood relationship.

In 988 the ambassador of Srivijaya in China began his journey homewards, but on reaching Canton heard that Sumatra was under attack from Java. When, after some delay, he arrived in Champa (now Vietnam), so depressing was the news from Sumatra that the ambassador returned to the imperial court of China in 992 and requested that Srivijaya should be placed under Chinese protection. He was followed soon after by envoys from King Dharmavamsa of East Java, who complained to the Chinese of Srivijaya's aggression against their kingdom. The Chinese recorded all these events in their *History of the Sung*, and seem to have regarded it as only right and proper that the southern 'barbarians' should lay their petitions before the imperial emperor. As always, the Chinese saw themselves as the policemen of the area – the civilized arbiters between irresponsible vassals.

Appeasing India

Little is known about the war between the two island powers except that Srivijaya, supported by its subordinate states in Malaya, eventually won. The Srivijayans burned down Dharmavamsa's palace, killed him and destroyed his empire. Srivijaya's victory was partly due to good diplomacy; the Sumatran kingdom managing to keep on good terms with both the Sung dynasty of China and the Chola dynasty of India, China and India being the Great Powers of the period. In 1003 King Chulamanivarmadeva of Srivijaya piously declared that he had built a Buddhist temple so that prayers might be chanted for the longevity of the Sung emperor. Two years later the same king built another temple, which was generously endowed by the Chola King Rajaraja, thus cementing Indo-Sumatran trading relations.

A demon in human form sits astride the prow of a royal Thai barge. The barge is used once a year during an autumn religious procession on the Chao Phya river in Bangkok.

The niceties of Indo-Sumatran relations were, however, rudely exploded only four years later, when Indian vessels began extensive attacks eastwards across the Indian Ocean, determined to wrest commercial power from the sailors and merchants of Srivijaya. King Rajaraja claimed, somewhat improbably, that in 1007 he captured 12,000 islands. His son and successor actually attacked Srivijaya's possessions in Malaya.

All this was duly reported to the Sung emperors by the outraged envoys of Srivijaya. The Chinese could hardly have welcomed this demonstration of Indian power, and in 1028 indicated their feelings by conferring special honours upon Srivijaya's ambassador. It is also interesting to note that accounts of events in Srivijaya made their way to Baghdad, capital of the Arab-Persian dynasty of the Abbasids; to the Arabs, Srivijaya was the empire of Zabag.

In 1030, Sumatra and Java struck a bargain, sealed by a royal marriage, and

Wat Benchamabopitr, or Marble Temple, in Bangkok was built in 1899 of white Italian marble with glazed roof tiles. On the gables are *Negas,* demi-gods of rain.

combined to defend themselves against encroachment by marauding forces of Chola Indians. Of the next 34 years, nothing at all is known. From 1068 the old pattern began to repeat itself: the Indonesian states alternately co-operated and warred among themselves; sometimes Srivijaya was on friendly terms with India, at other times it defended its territories against Indian pressure. Always China appeared as the elder brother, expecting to be officially informed of what went on, acting as umpire, expressing approval or disapproval. Probably the Chinese interest was commercial rather than political.

Century after century the Chinese diligently recorded their information and impressions. Srivijaya continued to flourish but not quite as well as before. In 1178 it dropped from first to third position in China's league table of wealthy barbarian states; Arabia and Java having supplanted it. In 1225 the Chinese *Record of Foreign Nations* listed Srivijaya as only one of 15 vassal states in Malaya and western Indonesia. The Chinese Inspector of Foreign Trade described the Srivijaya capital, Palembang, as a city built around creeks and waterways which teemed with people living in boats, houses on rafts, or in huts on the banks. The picture which emerges is not dissimilar from present-day Bangkok or the Chinese cities of the Yangtse Kiang. In 1292 Marco Polo visited Sumatra and referred to the leading state as *Malayu*. After 600 years the very name of Srivijaya had disappeared.

Islam and Mongolian invasions

Already, before Polo's visit, the king of Ligor, an emergent state of the eastern Malayan Peninsula, was interfering in the affairs of Ceylon, so weakening his realm that by about 1290 it succumbed to attack and possible annexation by the T'ai, a people who, over several centuries, crept slowly southwards from China into present-day Thailand and neighbouring states. The tangled relations between Ceylon, the T'ai and the Indonesian kingdoms were probably governed in part by religious rivalries between the Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist sects. Ligor, a Mahayanan state, possibly intervened in Theravada Ceylon because of a dispute involving the possession of Buddha's relics, particularly his begging bowl and the famous tooth kept at Kandy in northern Ceylon.

While the states of South East Asia quarrelled and destroyed one another, the Sung empire reeled under Mongol attack, and in 1279 disappeared completely to be replaced by the Mongol Yüan dynasty. The Mongol grip on southeastern Asia proved tighter than the Sung's. Meanwhile, a new powerful influence had arrived from across the Indian Ocean – Islam. Already by 1300 the harbours of Malaya and Indonesia were filled with Arab ships, manned by Moslems anxious to spread the message of the Prophet Mohammed. Slowly at first, and then decisively, Islam chased Buddhism and Hinduism out of Malaya and Indonesia; only Bali resisted the new faith, retaining its own form of Hinduism.

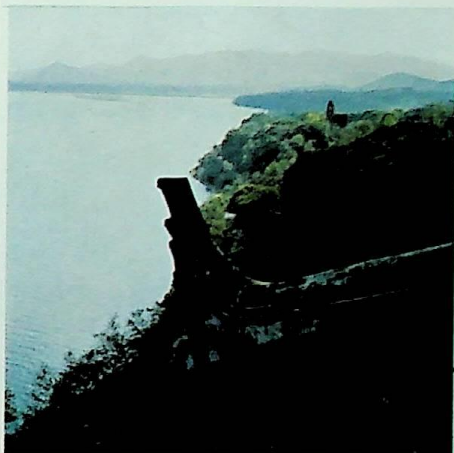
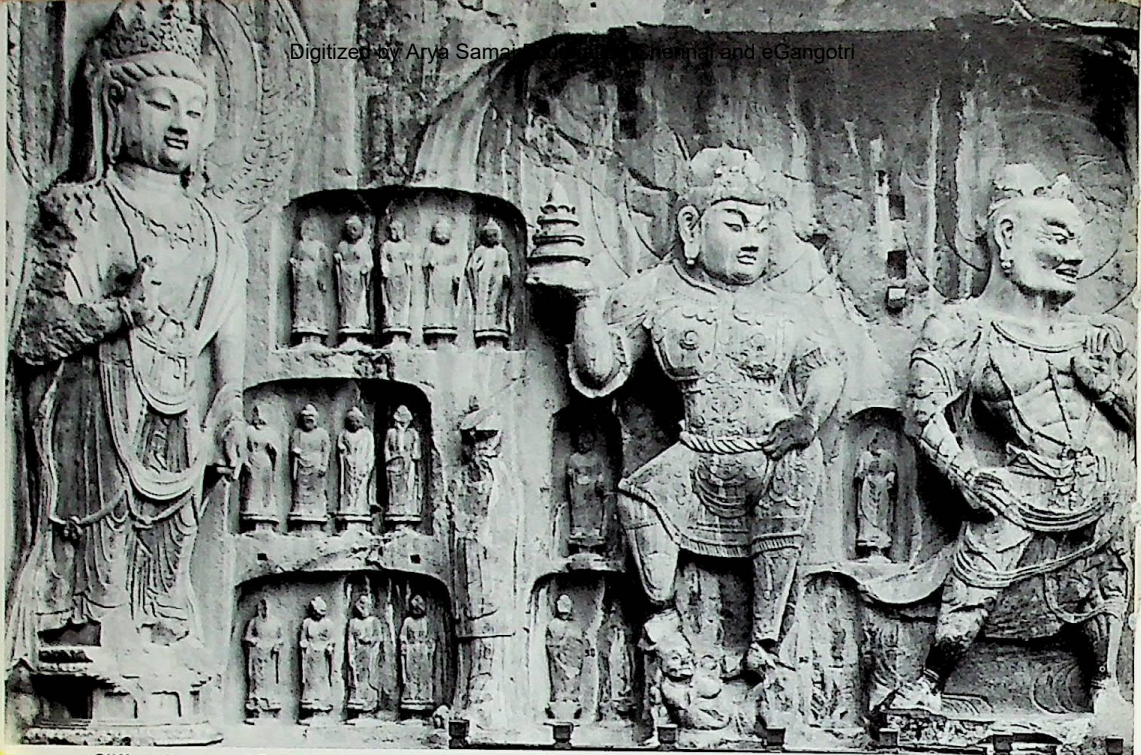
On the island of Bali, Hindu beliefs moulded by native practices survive to the present day. At a cremation, bones of the long-dead are borne on paper towers which are then burned.

Han emperors at China's helm

An army of desperate, yellow-turbaned peasants, the schemes of palace eunuchs, invasions by the Huns — these were the perils that beset the Han dynasty in their 400-year rule of China.

WHEN THE short-lived Ch'in dynasty (221–206 B C) which unified China collapsed, the soldier Liu Pang, the son of a peasant, became first emperor of the Han dynasty. Like all succeeding emperors, he is known to history by the name given to him after death. Liu Pang's posthumous name was Kao Tzu. After early difficulties in setting up his new government, the Han emperor succeeded in recruiting a number of competent administrators. At his command, one of his ministers wrote a report setting out the reasons why the Ch'in dynasty fell. The report concluded: 'The more powerful the armies of Ch'in grew, the more its enemies multiplied. The government was too harsh towards the people and punishment was too severe.' Liu Pang took note of this, and made concessions. He set free all people who had sold themselves into slavery for food during the Ch'in-Han war, and ended punishment by mutilation. He exempted demobilized soldiers from forced labour for up to 12 years, and reduced the need for conscript labour by cutting back the Ch'in dynasty's vast building projects.

Most people, including soldiers, came from peasant families, and agriculture was therefore extremely important socially as well as economically. Artisans had made iron tools centuries before Han times but now their use became widespread. Privately owned factories each employed up to a thousand men making iron agricultural implements. As a result of peace, efficient government and technological advance, food production increased, the population grew, remoter regions were developed, and life became a little more

Its banks heavily wooded, the river Fuchan flows towards the East China Sea as it has done through centuries of upheaval.

Cliff sculptures of Buddhas in the caves in Honan testify to the influence of the Buddhist faith. It reached China from India during the Han dynasty in the first century after Christ.

endurable for the peasant population.

Driven to slavery

The peasants remained desperately poor, however, producing just enough to keep themselves above famine level. When disaster came to a family, such as illness, death, drought or flood, they had to borrow from the money-lender, at interest rates which often reached 100 per cent a year. When this crippling burden became too heavy to bear, the peasants had either to sell their land to pay their debts and work for a landowner, or – the ultimate stage of misery – sell themselves into slavery in exchange for food.

Meanwhile the state itself prospered. Coin money accumulated in the treasury and new grain was stockpiled on top of the old, which, not being distributed, lay rotting underneath. Flood and drought, the twin calamities of China, were vigorously tackled by the Han emperors. Many irrigation canals were dug, and flood defences kept in good repair. Records tell that Emperor Wu Ti (reigned 141–86 BC) himself went to a work-site on the Hwang Ho (Yellow River) and ordered the officials with him to help repair a breach in the river defences. Finding that timber was short, he ordered bamboo to be cut and brought from his own estates. No serious flooding occurred in the lower Hwang Ho for the next 80 years. Wu Ti patronized scholars and kept a library of 13,000 books.

North of China, presenting for hundreds of years a terrifying threat to the empire, lived the Hsiung Nu (Huns). It was to protect China against these 'barbarians' that the first Ch'in emperor had built the Great Wall. The first Han emperor had

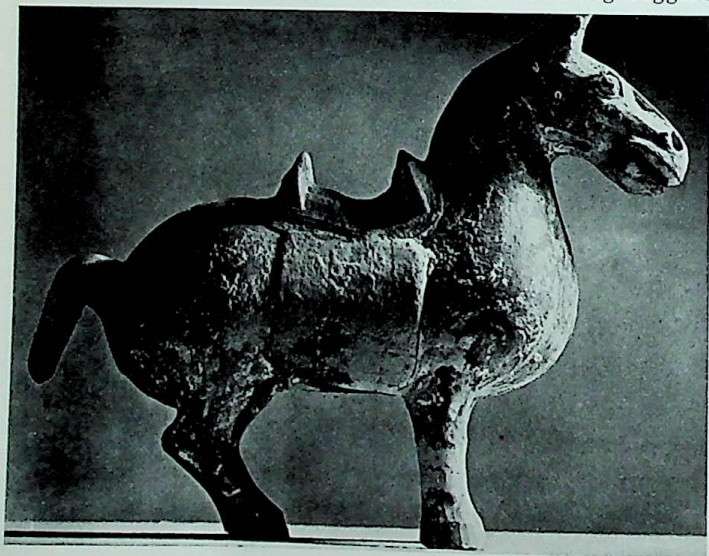
The pottery model of a watch-tower made during the Han dynasty, must be typical of many constructed to warn against the invading Huns, the Hsiung Nu.

bought off a threatened attack by 300,000 Hsiung Nu horsemen early in his reign, but these soon returned to the attack, daringly raiding the land as far south as the capital, Ch'ang-an. Emperor Wu Ti decided to make a stand, and in three great clashes in 127, 121, and 119 BC, Han armies drove the Hsiung Nu north of the Mongolian desert.

In 138 BC, before these bloody battles began, Wu Ti had sent an ambassador to Tukhara (now part of Afghanistan) to propose an alliance against the Hsiung Nu. The ambassador was captured by the Hsiung Nu and held for ten years before he finally escaped, reached his destination, and after a stay of a year, returned to Ch'ang-an. The ambassador's mission failed, but he brought back a report on the lands westward as far as Parthia and Ferghana (now parts of Iran and the U.S.S.R.). For the first time, the Chinese court learned the secrets of the extensive and profitable trade carried on between China and western Asia. Wu Ti's fertile mind saw the immense value of this trade, and regularized it. Chinese silks and metal-ware flowed westwards; and the caravans returned to China bringing luxuries such as coral and jade.

Peaches and pomegranates

Wu Ti coveted the fine horses of Ferghana, and requested the ruler to send him some. When his request was refused, he dispatched 100,000 soldiers 4,000 miles to Ferghana to punish the country. Nearly half of this vast army perished from thirst, hunger and exposure in the remote mountains and deserts of central Asia, but the survivors returned with the emperor's horses. Following this high-handed action, east–west trade increased, as did the flow of ideas. Grapes, peaches, pomegranates and clover were introduced into China along with the music and dances of central Asia. In return, Chinese 'know-how' in well-sinking and iron-smelting was communicated to central and western Asia.

From the end of Wu Ti's long reign onwards, the plight of the peasants deteriorated. In one year alone, 2,000,000 peasants lost their land and became wandering beggars. Floods and drought

The horse was very highly prized by the Chinese; this model is made of grey clay.

bore heavily on the farmers, many of whom died from starvation and lay unburied in the barren fields. By the end of the first century BC, peasant revolts became frequent and more and more dangerous to the régime.

After the Emperor Yüan Ti died in 32 BC, four boys came to the throne one after another. The last, a one-year-old baby, was dethroned by the regent, Wang Mang, who then usurped the throne, declaring himself first emperor of the Hsin (New) dynasty. Wang Mang sought to placate the peasants by sharing out the land more equally. The rich and powerful opposed him, however, and his land laws were repealed. Wang Mang forbade trade in private slaves, but kept the official slaves unfreed. In fact he increased their numbers by several hundred thousand by officially enslaving coin forgers and their households.

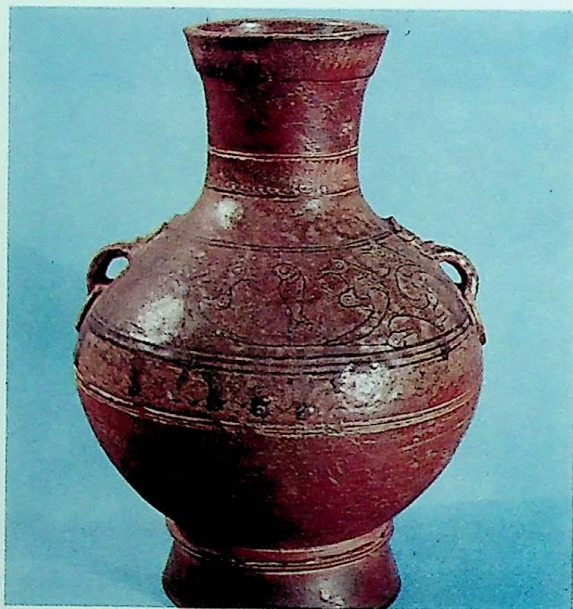
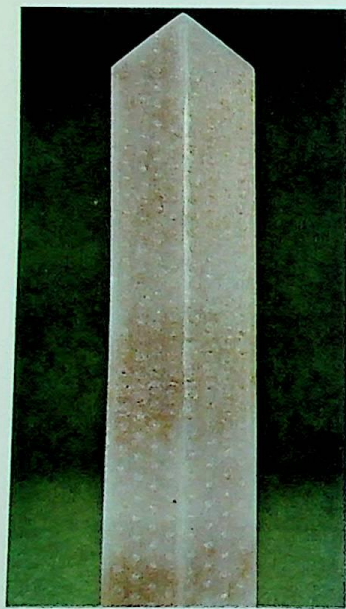
Some of Wang Mang's policies such as the attempt to control prices and the granting of low-interest loans to needy people, if successful, could have gone far to relieve the distress of the peasants. But the benefits of these measures were lost because corrupt officials pocketed much money which should have gone either to the state or to the people. Wang Mang brought much of the economy under state control, but this did not help the people, because they had to pay taxes to the government for 'privileges' which had formerly been free. For example, they had to pay for the right to fish, and to collect firewood. A large proportion even of this revenue found its way into the pockets of the officials.

Wang Mang planned the final destruction of the Hsiung Nu in order both to annex their lands and to distract the minds of his own subjects from the distress in China. He goaded the Hsiung Nu to attack China by calculated insults, demanding that they change their name to *Hsiang Nu* (subjugated slaves). While a vast Chinese army gathered on the border of the Hsiung Nu territory, Turkestan slipped away from Chinese control.

The Lulin army

In Hupeh and Shantung provinces, drought again ruined the land, and locusts devoured what crops there were. Starving peasants gathered in the Lulin Hills and organized themselves into a huge army. This force was whittled down by plague, but others flocked to its banner. In time, the Lulin army came under the control of Liu Hsiu, a prince of the deposed Han dynasty. The Lulin army dispersed a large army sent against them and advanced to Ch'ang-an. But in the capital Wang Mang was already dead, killed by rebels who opened the gates of the city to the besiegers. Meanwhile, the Lulin army had split into rival factions. Eventually, in AD 25, after much confusion, Liu Hsiu proclaimed himself emperor. He set up his capital in Loyang, crushed the peasant armies, and unified China under his new dynasty, the Eastern Han. After his death, Liu Hsiu was called Emperor Kuang Wu.

The civil wars ended Chinese suzerainty over the western trade routes, which fell into the hands of the resurgent Hsiung Nu. People in the western regions appealed in vain for protection to the powerless Eastern Han emperor, much as Britons were to appeal in vain to the dying power of Rome for protection against the Anglo-Saxons, four centuries later. The triumph of the Hsiung Nu was short-lived, however. Large numbers of them, together with the livestock by which they lived, died from the effects of drought and locusts. As if the troubles inflicted upon them by nature were not enough, the Hsiung Nu drifted into a debilitating civil war that left the predominance of power with the northern group and forced the southern Hsiung Nu to seek the protection of the Eastern Han emperor.

Following the pattern of the first Han

During the span of the Han dynasty the empire was united after the disastrous era of the Ch'in. With peace new trade routes were opened and new influences penetrated to enrich the quality of Chinese life and art. *Left,* a bronze clasp encrusted with turquoises. *Left below,* a sceptre like this, whose shape is known as a *ku kuei,* was used by the emperors in court and religious ceremonies. *Right and right below,* a pottery and a porcelain *hu,* used for storing wine.

emperors, the first Eastern Han emperor made concessions to win popular support. He freed the slaves, carried out flood and irrigation projects, and reduced taxes and forced labour. Forty years of peace brought prosperity and added strength to the empire. In AD 73, 89 and 91 Han armies dealt crushing blows to the northern Hsiung Nu and steadily pushed them further to the northwest. There they were contained, and when they rode out again 250 years later it was not into China, but Europe – led by the terrible Attila. They defeated the Goths and Gauls and came near to destroying the eastern and western Roman empires. Then the people they subjugated rose in revolt, and in the mid-fifth century the Huns disappeared from history, becoming assimilated into the various ethnic groups of Europe.

Almost simultaneously with his success in the first battle against the Hsiung Nu, the first Eastern Han emperor sent an ambassador off to the western regions as Emperor Wu Ti had done more than 200 years earlier. In the following 30 years, Chinese diplomacy was studiously applied throughout the western regions, and more than 50 small states came under Han influence.

Revolt of the Ch'iang

In northwestern China, in the provinces of Kansu and Chinghai, dwelt the Ch'iang, warlike nomads living under the suzerainty of the Han emperors. In AD 107 the Ch'iang armed themselves with bamboo spears and attacked Han officials and landlords who oppressed them. Many Chinese colonists who had moved into the area threw in their lot with the Ch'iang. Fierce fighting continued for about 60 years. During this period Han armies also clashed with another nomadic people, the Yao of southern central China, who twice defeated the emperor's troops. The Han government finally won, but the long exhausting wars brought the Chinese economy to the brink of disaster.

After the first three Eastern Han rulers, a succession of boy emperors came to the throne. Regents exercised power and they and their supporters exploited the nation in their own interests. One regent, Liang Chi, appropriated for himself land and possessions equal in value to six months' taxes for the whole of China. He forced thousands of people into slavery, claiming that they had sold themselves voluntarily.

Puppets of the eunuchs

During the reign of Han Shun Ti (AD 126–144) a strange corruption crept into government, a weakness that was ultimately to bring about the ruin of the Han dynasty. The numerous eunuchs who attended the women of the harem began to wield political power through their influence over the emperor. This came about because court etiquette kept the emperor secluded, mostly confined to the palace. Even his audience with ministers became so formal that they had to speak to him through a court official. The eunuchs were the only men allowed to live in the palace. Living in such close association with the emperors, knowing their weaknesses and foibles, screening them from the outside world, the eunuchs came to dominate them, and through them, to control the government of the empire.

This had not happened under the first three Eastern Han emperors because they were experienced men of the world before they ascended the throne. But the boy

emperors, born and brought up in the palace, became the puppets of the eunuchs. Emperor Han Huan Ti (146–167), helped by the eunuchs, killed all the members of a powerful family called Liang who had tried to dominate him, and had indeed poisoned the previous child emperor. In gratitude to the eunuchs for their help in these murders, the emperor heaped wealth and honours upon them, and accepted their advice in all matters of state.

The scholars of China, a hereditary class, which traditionally provided the officials to govern the empire, banded together to protect their own interests against the eunuchs. They achieved some initial success, but the eunuchs struck back savagely. When the 12-year-old emperor, Han Ling Ti, ascended the throne in AD 168, they persuaded him that the scholars were plotting treason. With his acquiescence, all the leading scholars and officials who opposed them were arrested and executed. The entire administration of the country then fell into the hands of the eunuchs and those whom they appointed or confirmed in office. Again a great weight of oppression fell upon the poor peasants.

While these events were taking place, a popular magician called Chang Chiao roamed the countryside, building up a huge following from his reputation as a curer of diseases. The peasants came to look upon Chang Chiao as their deliverer, and joined with him in a secret society formed to secure the overthrow of the eunuchs. Chang Chiao and his chief lieutenants drew their inspiration from a cult called 'Taiping Tao' which derived from Chinese Taoism, Persian Mazdaism and local superstitions. He and his lieutenants made preparations for the peasants to rise in arms all over China on the fifth of March, in AD 184. But a month or so before this date their plans were betrayed to the eunuchs, who arrested and killed a thousand of the conspirators.

Chang Chiao acted swiftly. He mobilized the peasants in February. They donned yellow turbans as a 'uniform', rose as one army, and conquered city after city, killing all officials who did not flee in time. But Chang Chiao – the healer of others – died of illness in August. In November, the Yellow Turbans lost their main army in merciless battles against the combined armies of the eunuch-government, local warlords, and the landlords, now allied because of their common terror of the peasants' vengeance. But the fight continued for another 20 years. In Hopei province alone, the Yellow Turbans mustered a million men. Finally, however, their enemies destroyed them.

During this long war, real power gradually passed into the hands of the generals, who were commanding vast armies. These generals came to despise and hate the eunuchs who presumed to give them orders. But the eunuchs would not surrender their claim to power easily. When the commanding general surrounded the palace with his army, the eunuchs lured him inside, killed him and defiantly exhibited his head over the gate. The enraged army then burst into the palace and killed every eunuch. The reigning emperor – another puppet – became the personal prisoner of a brutal general named Ts'ao Ts'ao. China then disintegrated into anarchy. In AD 220, the pitiful Eastern Han emperor finally abdicated in favour of Ts'ao Ts'ao's son, Ts'ao P'ei, who controlled northern China, which became the kingdom of Wei. Southeastern China broke away as the kingdom of Wu, and southwestern China became the kingdom of Shu-Han. In this way, China, after four centuries of union under Han rule, disintegrated, and was ruled for the next three and a half centuries by contending dynasties controlling rival states.

Mongols: the scourge of Christendom

From the obscurity of their barren homeland the Mongols hordes, led by Genghiz Khan, mounted their attack on the world. Wave after wave of them overran Asia and Europe, from Hungary to Korea.

THE ARID, now barely inhabited, Mongolian Plateau of eastern central Asia was for hundreds of years a centre of dynamic human activity. From this vast region of the cold Gobi desert, for reasons still largely unknown, emerged wave upon wave of energetic nomads, against whose remorseless attacks no state within 4,000 miles of Mongolia, however strong or civilized, could consider itself immune. Long before the Ch'in emperor constructed his Great Wall to defend China in the third century B C, lesser Chinese rulers had been compelled to build defences against the Hsiung Nu. These Mongolian people, later called *Huns*, struck terror into the heart of Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries A D, plundering as far westwards as present-day France and Italy. By about 1300 A D the Mongol empire was the largest the world has ever known. The rise and fall of the Mongol empire is one of the great wonders of history.

From earliest-known times the Mongols' whole way of life has depended on animals and their products. Sheep, goats and cattle provided their food, clothing, tents and riding equipment; small, stocky horses and two-humped camels carried the Mongols and their equipment from one patch of pasture land to the next.

Trained to fight from boyhood

Mongol children, nourished by fermented mares' milk called *koumiss,* quickly learned to ride and like their parents became more at home on horseback than on foot. Large savage dogs accompanied the nomads on their wanderings, driving their domesticated animals and guarding their encampments. Among the few non-animal products which the Mongols carried were the wooden frames of their portable felt tents (called *gers*, or *yurts*) and a chest armour of wood or iron which they developed for organized warfare. Their principal weapon was the bow, and Mongol boys learned to shoot arrows from small bows with great skill. As they grew to manhood, they increased the size of their bows and the length of their arrows, which they shot at enemies with deadly accuracy.

For well over a thousand years various Chinese dynasties claimed suzerainty over the Mongol tribes, as they did over most other peoples who lived within about 1,500 miles of the emperor's palace. But the Mongols, being tough and mobile, were

Mongolian boys learned the art of war while still young. Genghiz Khan, followed by his white-robed mother, fights at the age of 12.

Genghiz Khan, the fierce leader who united the Mongolian tribes into a fighting force and set out in 1206 to conquer the world.

not an easy people from whom to exact tribute, and more often than not the Chinese preferred to forgo the tribute rather than try to exact it.

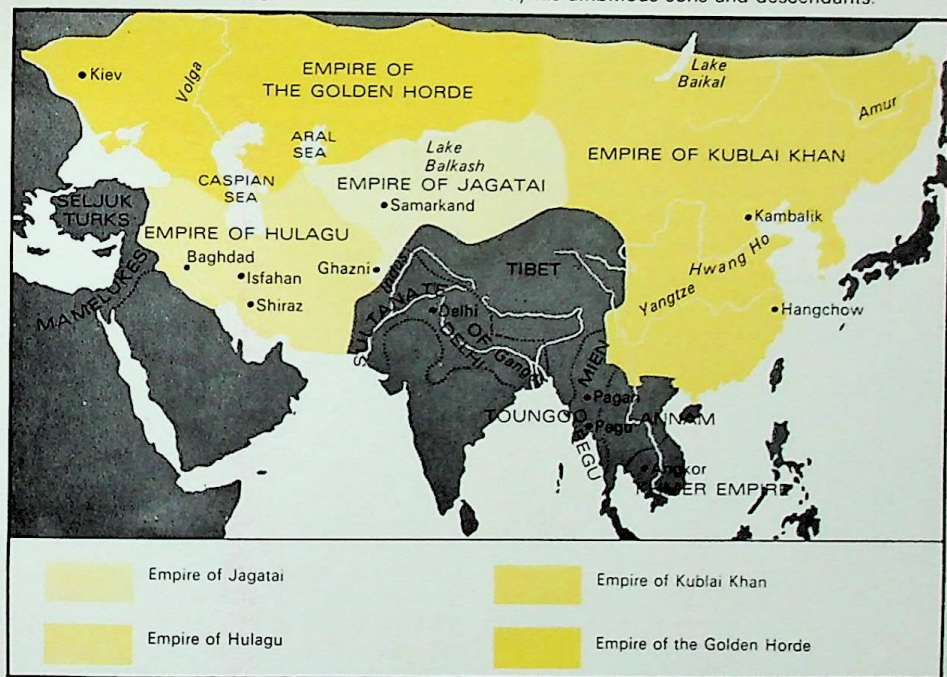
The Mongols burst out of their obscurity into history in the early thirteenth century when Temujin ('Ironsmith'), a tribal leader, united a number of loosely organized tribes into a single, disciplined force. With this force he subdued the remaining tribes, and hammered the Mongols into an efficient fighting force. In 1206 Temujin assumed the title of *Genghiz Khan* (King of the Earth) – a hint that he intended to conquer the world.

Genghiz Khan's first target was close at hand – the rich civilized lands of northern China, where the once powerful Sung dynasty had ceased to have any influence. These northern lands had fallen under the control of the Kin (or Chin), an agricultural, hunting and fishing people of the area later called Manchuria. Under the spur of oppression, the Kin had developed into a warrior people in the early twelfth century, defeating the northern Sung dynasty, and bringing northern China under their rule. Theirs was a brutal régime and they made slaves of many of the Han people who lived in northern China.

Genghiz began his offensive against the Kin in the classical Mongol way by withholding tribute. At the same time, he made a secret pact with the Sung in the southern part of China. He began his attack on the province of Hsi-Hsia, in what is now north-central China, in 1211. The Kin empire was protected by the Great Wall of China, built more than a thousand years earlier, but by that time somewhat in a state of disrepair. The Mongols, experts at sieges, soon overran the Wall and the fortresses, where the Kin soldiers sought refuge, slaughtering the garrisons and the civilian inhabitants. Killing, plundering and burning, the Mongol hordes swept all before them, driving across the northern provinces to Yenching (now Peking), the Kin capital. By 1215 Yenching had fallen and the Mongols controlled the whole of China north of the Hwang Ho, the Yellow River. They stripped the Chinese cities of their

wealth, and conscripted the ablest of the Chinese soldiers to instruct the Mongol armies in strategy and the use of new weapons, including explosives. The northern Chinese welcomed the Mongols as liberators from the hated Kin, rather than as oppressors. Many of the Kin took service under the Mongols; others returned to Manchuria and obscurity, from which their descendants later emerged as the Manchus.

Genghiz Khan decided to leave southern China alone and swing westwards, through central Asia, towards the rich Moslem kingdom of Persia. His well-trained and highly mobile troops swept through the difficult country of what is now southern Siberia, overcoming the hazards of snow and heat, floods and desert sands. They captured and looted many famous cities, including Samarkand, Tashkent, Bokhara and Herat. It was Genghiz Khan's rule to spare cities which surrendered but pyramids of skulls bore mute witness to the Mongol ferocity where people resisted. Northwest India and Afghanistan fell to the invaders. In 1222 they entered Europe, defeating Russian and Bulgarian armies. By the time he died Genghiz Khan ruled from the Yellow Sea in the east to the banks of the Dnieper in southern Russia. He foresaw that this vast, loosely organized empire could not survive intact for long. He decreed that at his death it should be split into four parts ruled by his three surviving sons, Ogdai, Jagatai and Tule, and the descendants of his eldest son Juji, who had died earlier. When, therefore, he died in 1227, after a hunting fall, the title of khan passed to Ogdai, and

The map shows the vast spread of the Mongol empire. Begun by Genghiz Khan, it was extended by his ambitious sons and descendants.

he and Tule began a fresh campaign of conquest and pillage in China, which was to last until 1279.

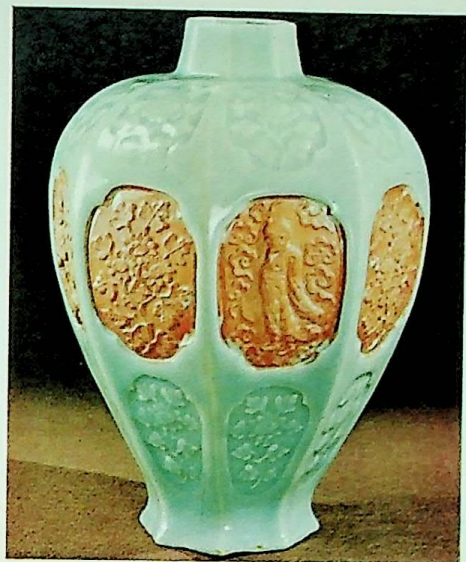
In the west, a Mongol army invaded eastern Europe. It was led by Batu, Juji's son, and Subotai, one of Genghiz Khan's *orkhons* (marshals). They crossed the Volga and attacked Ryazan, 100 miles southeast of Moscow, took the city by assault and killed the citizens. Moscow (then of minor importance) and Kiev, a far greater city, in the Ukraine, were also quickly captured; Kiev was razed to the ground. The Mongols then swept into Poland, and Hungary, whose people were the only ones of Mongol race still outside the control of Genghiz Khan's successors. There they won a resounding victory at Pest, killing over 70,000 of the Hungarian army, crossing the Danube on the ice and laying waste a great deal of the countryside. The campaign was abandoned when news came of the death of Ogdai; Batu had to return to the Mongolian capital, Karakorum, where the *kuriltai* (great council) met to decide on Ogdai's successor. Batu later went back to Europe, where he founded and ruled a new Mongol state on the lower Volga, known as the Golden Horde.

This lamasery now stands where Ogdai, son of Genghiz Khan, built the Mongol empire's capital of Karakorum in the thirteenth century.

Thousands massacred

The new khan was Ogdai's son Kuyuk, whose seven-year rule was relatively uneventful. The khanate then passed to Tule's sons, the eldest of whom, Mangu, became Great Khan in the 1250s. In 1258 Mangu's younger brother, Hulagu, crushed a revolt which had broken out in Persia, and captured the city of Baghdad, then the centre of Islam. The Caliph of Baghdad, who proved unco-operative, was beaten to death and hundreds of thousands of his people were massacred. Hulagu then advanced into Syria, capturing Damascus and Antioch. Mesopotamia, the fertile land between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, was laid waste, and remained so for more than 600 years. Hulagu was contemplating taking Jerusalem when once again the death of a khagan (Great Khan) halted a Mongol campaign: Hulagu returned to Mongolia in 1259 to attend the kuriltai. His keenness to return was probably influenced by a severe defeat at the hands of an Egyptian army led by the Mameluke Sultan Kutuz, at Ain Jelat.

The successor as Khagan, chosen by his own troops, was Kublai, a younger brother of Mangu and Hulagu. Kublai and Mangu had together been conquering southern China and Tibet. Hulagu established his own dynasty in Persia, acknowledging his brother's supremacy as Great Khan.

Kublai Khan ruled as emperor of China for 35 years. He adopted the dynastic title of emperor in 1271, some 11 years after he came to power, founding a dynasty known as the Yuan dynasty, which lasted for more than a century. He loved Chinese culture, and ruled according to traditional Chinese ways. But he mistrusted the Chinese politically (minor rebellions flared throughout his reign), and drew his counsellors, governors, and

During Kublai Khan's rule of China, art and international trade flourished. This decorated celadon vase dates from the Yuan dynasty.

Marco Polo, the Venetian explorer and trader, kneeling before Kublai Khan who ruled China for 35 years until he died in 1294.

officials from other territories under Mongol rule. He abhorred unnecessary bloodshed, and had won territory from the Sung with only a few deaths, compared with the wholesale slaughter of his ancestors. His court at Peking was rich and brilliant. He encouraged artists, writers and musicians, and developed trade with other countries. Shipping thronged the busy ports of Fuchow, Hangchow and Canton. He built better roads and sign-posted them, and also established a simple postal service. Himself a Buddhist, he adopted a tolerant attitude to other religions: Christians, Buddhists, Taoists and Moslems were equally welcome at his court.

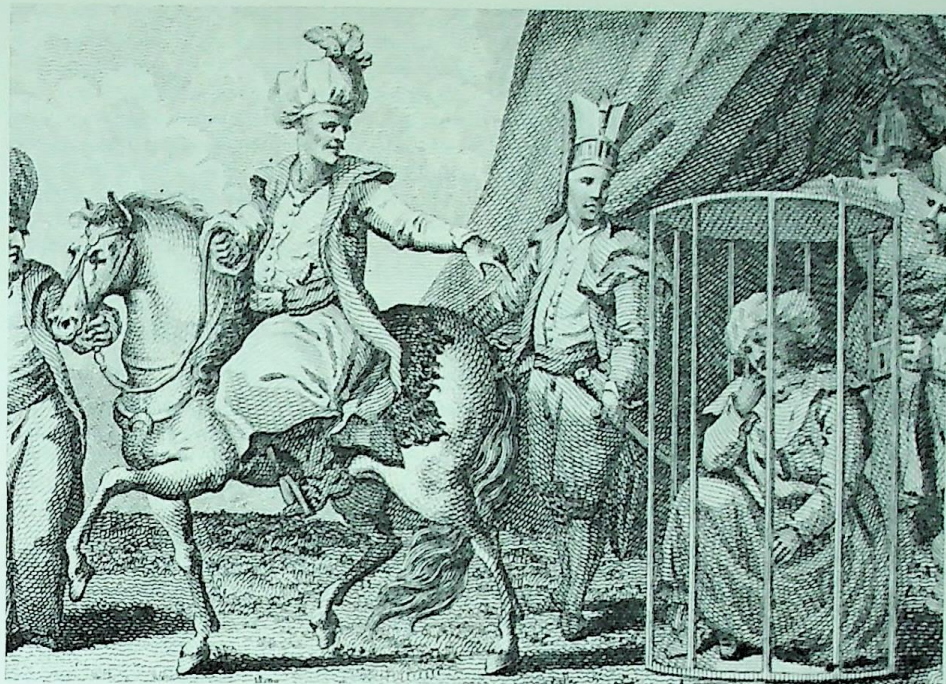
Kublai Khan became famous in Europe through the writings of a Venetian explorer and trader, Marco Polo, who lived at the court from 1275 to 1292. Marco Polo has left us a vivid description of Kublai and of Khanbalik, as Peking was then known. The Great Khan, he wrote, was of moderate height, his complexion 'fair and ruddy like a rose'. By his four wives he had 22 sons.

Kublai's palace aroused the special admiration of Marco Polo. He told of its huge size – the great hall alone could hold several thousand people, he said – and of its shining roof. Ceilings and walls were adorned with gold and silver. In the grounds was an artificial lake, stocked with a great variety of fish.

Too large an empire

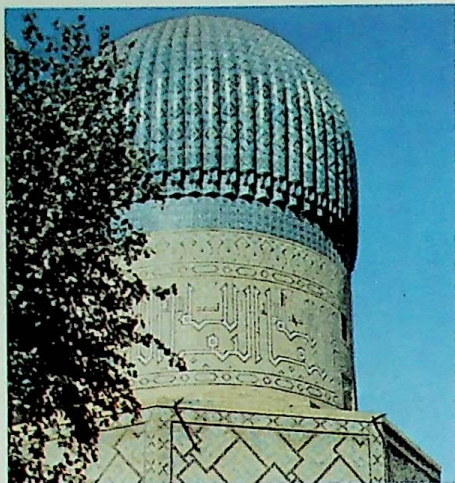
Despite Marco Polo's tales of peace and prosperity, all was not quite so quiet as it appeared. At a time of slow communications, it was impossible for one emperor to rule an area stretching from Hungary to the China Sea. Even in southern China Kublai's authority was never really

acknowledged, and in Russia, Persia and other distant territories little heed was paid to the dictates of an emperor who, Chinese at heart, had little real interest in his other provinces. But an attempt to overthrow him by his cousin, Kaida, and Nayan, the greatest Mongol general of the time, was swiftly crushed in 1288 by Kublai who, despite advancing age, retained all his old military skill.

After the golden age of Kublai, who died in 1294, at the age of 78, the Mongol empire swiftly began to break up. The rulers of the outlying provinces went their own ways and Kublai's successors, able and benevolent rulers though they were,

Tamerlane, a brilliant Mongol warrior, was notorious for his terrible cruelty and merciless slaughter of his enemies, *left*. When Tamerlane defeated and captured Bayazid, he imprisoned the Turkish sultan in a cage and had him carried about until he died, *above*.

could not hold the empire together. The principal breakaway states were the Golden Horde, and the Persian kingdom under the descendants of Hulagu.

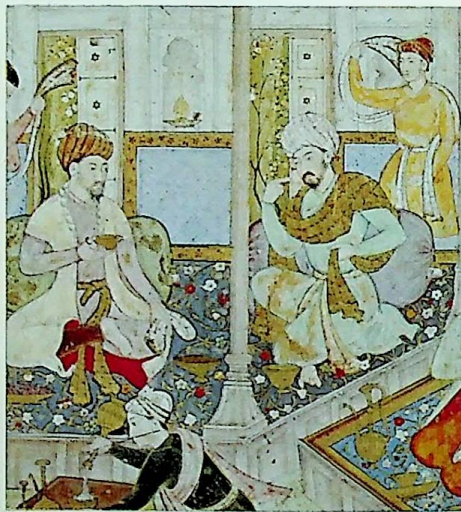
In China itself storms, floods and earthquakes brought pestilence and suffering. So wretched and unhappy was the lot of the Chinese that a Buddhist monk, Chu Yuan-chang, attributing the misfortunes of his countrymen to rule by foreigners, determined to end their reign. He formed the Red Turbans, a secret band of armed peasants, who rose in revolt. Despite his religious vocation, Chu was a man of rare military ability. From 1355 to 1368 he fought a series of battles, winning over more and more of the wealthy landowners to his side and gradually pushing the armies of the Mongols further north. The last of the Mongol emperors fled to Mongolia, and in 1368 Chu proclaimed himself as Emperor Tai-tsu, first of the Ming Dynasty. Not content with bringing the rule of the Mongols in China to an end, Chu dispatched a huge army and in a series of successful campaigns broke the power of the eastern Mongols.

In the west, the Russians tried to drive out the Golden Horde, and broke its power after two victories in 1378 and 1380. Another group, the White Horde, under their leader Toktamish, then reunited the tribes of the Golden Horde and ravaged Moscow and other cities in a series of attacks. But Toktamish overreached him-

In this mausoleum in Gur-Amir, Samarkand, is the tomb of Tamerlane, who died in 1405 on his way to attack China.

self when he tried to demand the cession of territories ruled by another Mongol chief, Timur (1336–1405), whose capital was Samarkand. In many hard battles Timur broke the power of Toktamish, finally defeating him in 1391. His victory scattered the tribes of the Golden Horde and allowed the Russians to regain control of the territory.

Timur was called Timur the Lame – Tamerlane – from a wound which left him with a permanent limp. He was a military genius, but fortunately for the Russians his ambitions lay south and not north. After crushing the Golden Horde, Tamerlane swept down into Persia, capturing Baghdad and pressing on through the Khyber Pass into India. There he stormed Multan and Meerut and sacked Delhi. He returned to Persia to find that the Mamelukes of Egypt and the Ottoman Turks had united against him and recaptured Baghdad. He stormed the city, defeated the Mamelukes at Aleppo, and then attacked the Turks. He defeated the Turkish Sultan, Bayazid the Thunderbolt, at Angora in 1402, and took him prisoner. Once again Mongol armies threatened Europe. But Tamerlane's ambitions lay elsewhere. He returned to Samarkand, the capital of the new Mongol empire he had created. In 1405, he died on his way to attack China, and the new empire collapsed.

A century later one of his descendants, Babar, raised an army and invaded India. There he established a fresh Mongol state called the Kingdom of the Great Mughals. His grandson, Akbar, who succeeded to the throne of the new state in 1556, set out to end the distrust and dislike which existed between Moslems and Hindus. Himself a Moslem, he married a Hindu girl and appointed Hindus to government posts. Under his absolute but benevolent rule justice was administered impartially, better standards of weights and measures were introduced, and many beautiful buildings were erected. The rule of the last great Mongol leader was a complete contrast to the destruction and massacres carried out by his forebears.

Babar, who invaded India and founded the Mogul empire in the sixteenth century, at a banquet with one of his advisers.

China's emperor from the steppes

He extended Mongol rule throughout China, and dreamed of a universal empire. But Kublai Khan's achievement rested on the force of personality and his dynasty lasted a bare hundred years.

'I HAVE HEARD that one can conquer the empire on horseback, but one cannot govern it on horseback.'

This deceptively simple saying, which occurs in a memorial presented to the Emperor Kublai by one of his Chinese advisers, illustrates the central dilemma which faced him at the beginning of his reign. The great Mongol campaigns, which had involved enormous damage and destruction and untold loss of life, had been begun by Kublai's grandfather, Genghiz Khan. Genghiz and his sons had united various Mongol and other nomadic tribes living in Central Asia, and had led their invading armies westwards as far as the Adriatic and eastwards into north China.

Some of the outlying conquests, especially those in Europe, were soon abandoned, but in Asia the Mongol royal family began to organize the lands and peoples they had conquered into a personal empire. As the more densely populated areas of China came under Mongol sway, however, more complicated problems of pacification and administration emerged. The empire no longer consisted just of broad pasture-lands and free-wandering nomadic tribes, but contained towns and cities, farmers, scholars and traders with a long history of culture behind them. How were the rough Mongol warriors, uneducated and uncultured in comparison with the Chinese, and inexperienced in the arts of government, to govern their new empire without becoming assimilated by their subjects? And if Kublai did become a Chinese rather than a Mongol ruler, what effect would this have on his relations with that branch of the imperial family which had stayed behind in the steppes and guarded the old Mongol traditions?

The break with the past

In fact, Kublai turned his back on the Mongol way of life and evolved into a typical Chinese emperor. Yet at the same time the Mongols in China, and the foreigners they brought in to help them govern, remained largely aloof from the native population. Kublai's reign marked a peak of prosperity for China, but it provoked an irreparable quarrel with the Mongols left behind in the homeland and lost forever the allegiance of the Islamicized Mongols in Persia.

A portrait of the Emperor Kublai (1215-94), grandson of the great Genghiz, founder of the Mongol dynasty in China, and recognized as one of history's great leaders.

Kublai was born in 1215 as one of the sons of Tule, the fourth son of Genghiz Khan. It was not until 1251, however, that he began to play an important role in the extension and organization of the Mongol empire. In that year his brother Mangu, who had just been elected *khagan* or emperor, decided to continue the conquest of China and ordered Kublai to take full civil and military responsibility for the Chinese lands south of the Gobi desert. This task involved the assimilation of several distinct areas – the already conquered northern part of China which had formerly been ruled by the Chin dynasty and the former kingdom of Hsi-Hsia in the west, for example – and the military conquest of South China, ruled over by the Sung dynasty. The first real campaign against Sung began in 1252, and Kublai directed it southwards through present-day Yunnan, meaning to take Sung in the flank. When the Mongols took the Sung city of Tali it was Kublai's firm intention to massacre the inhabitants, as Genghiz would have done, in reprisal for the murder of some of his ambassadors. But he allowed himself to be dissuaded by his Chinese advisers, and this display of humanity, which was to be repeated at the taking of most of the cities of South China, shows how far the Mongols had progressed in civilized behaviour within two generations.

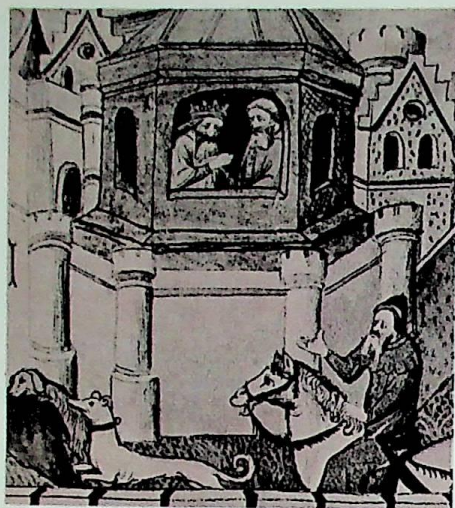
Unlike his ancestors before him, Kublai disliked aimless slaughter and always urged his generals to behave with restraint. His attitude was no doubt influenced by his deep interest in Confucian philosophy and ideals of statecraft, for as early as 1235 he had begun to gather around him a group of Chinese advisers who introduced him to their traditions. He had young Mongols trained in Confucian learning, and he himself organized his personal domain in the valley of the Wei River on Chinese lines, as later he was to organize his whole empire.

Kublai's capital

Kublai was not yet emperor, but in this, the first of various 'colonial' wars, we already see him acting more as a Chinese than a Mongol. He was no longer concerned, as Genghiz had been, merely to extend Mongol conquests, but appears to have been motivated by a strong desire to re-establish Chinese political and cultural influence over those parts of South and East Asia which were thought of as belonging to the Chinese sphere. Tali was conquered but not devastated. Its king was confirmed as a subordinate ruler, with the Indian title of *maharaja,* and a Mongol

resident was appointed to exercise real authority. Tali was thus incorporated in the Mongol empire with a minimum of violence, and thereafter remained steadfastly loyal to the Mongol emperors.

After the occupation of Tali, Kublai was temporarily recalled from the field by Mangu and given a subordinate command. For a time he busied himself with the administration of his own domain, but then another important task was assigned to him – the siting and founding of a new capital for the empire. Mangu had already realized that Karakorum, capital of Ogdai (Mongol khan from 1229 to 1241), which had been founded as recently as 1235, was too isolated, too distant from the new centre of gravity of the empire, to be of much use. Kublai fixed upon a site in what is now Inner Mongolia, near present-day Dolonnor. Here he began to build a palace which was known as Kaiping and later as Shangtu, the 'Upper Capital' – Coleridge's Xanadu. But Shangtu never in fact became an imperial capital. It was to serve Kublai only as a summer residence, and it was to Yenching inside China itself, later to be called Tatu, the 'Great Capital', that he moved the administrative centre of his empire in 1264. Tatu, which Marco Polo knew under its Tartar name, Khan-

Kublai Khan, his army behind him, crosses a river on a bridge of boats during his campaigns in southern China. Full conquest was finally achieved in 1279.

A print from the book of the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, showing Kublai Khan in Yenching, the city he built, later known as Tatu, the 'Great Capital', and present-day Peking.

balik, developed into present-day Peking. That the Mongol capital should have been transferred from the steppes of Mongolia to Chinese territory shows decisively how far Kublai had resolved the contradiction between the nomadic and settled ways of life.

The Sung empire was still a long way from having been conquered when Mangu died in 1259. Mongol custom demanded that the royal princes should then assemble to elect a new emperor – it was only the fulfilment of this requirement which had saved Europe from being completely overrun in 1241, when the death of Ogdai had caused the Mongols to make a hurried withdrawal. At first Kublai seems to have been reluctant to abandon the campaign against Sung to take part in the election of a successor to Mangu, but then rumours reached him that his brother, Arik-buga, with the support of a number of princes who had remained loyal to the old way of life, was planning to have himself elected in Karakorum. Kublai therefore agreed to an armistice with Sung and returned to Yenching early in 1260. From there he made his way to Kaiping where, on 5 May, he had himself proclaimed emperor. Ten days later he announced his accession in an edict drawn up in the Chinese language, and later that year he proclaimed a Chinese-style reign-title by which the years of his reign were to be numbered. Later still, in 1271, he formally established the Mongol dynasty under the Chinese title of 'Ta Yuan', 'The Great Beginning'.

Kublai's right to the succession was disputed throughout his reign by members of his family. His seizure of the empire provoked a sharp clash with Arik-buga, and this brought out into the open the latent cleavage in the Mongol world between those who, like Kublai, saw the future as a China-centred one, and those who resented the abandonment of the old rougher ways of the steppe and the adoption of an alien culture. No doubt mere personal ambition played a large part in the quarrel too. Arik-buga was soon dealt with. He had himself proclaimed emperor in Karakorum in 1260 with the support of a number of princes, of whom the most important was Kaida, a grandson of the emperor Ogdai. Four years later Arik-buga had been defeated and captured. But Kaida never relaxed his hostility, and the civil wars which he provoked and led in the north probably constituted a graver threat to the survival of the Mongol empire than did the partial or complete failure of Kublai's campaigns in the south and overseas against foreign peoples.

Kaida forged his own khanate in Central Asia out of his lands in the Tarbagatai region and part of the khanate of Genghiz's son Jagatai which he had annexed. Then, proclaiming himself emperor, he attacked Kublai. A first war took place in 1275, and in 1287 Kaida formed a new coalition of

An imaginative illustration shows Kublai's soldiers riding down on the rebel Mongol general Nayan, a ruler of the territory later known as Manchuria: he was defeated in 1288.

princes. His ally Nayan was defeated by Kublai himself, who took the field at the age of 72, and Kaida was never able to interfere in the affairs of China. However, he remained master of Mongolia and Turkestan, and outlived Kublai. It was only in 1301 that he was finally defeated and killed.

The war with Kaida shows how far the emperor had identified himself with things Chinese, how far he had lost control over the aristocracy of the steppes, and how far those personal and family loyalties, which in the time of Genghiz Khan had been sufficient to unite the various members of the royal house, had been weakened or broken. This must have been apparent to Kublai. He must have seen Kaida's successful opposition as a portent of the collapse of his dream of a universal empire. But it was an inevitable process. The contradictions between the nomadism of the northern steppes and the settled agricultural and urban life of the south, between Mongol feudalism and Chinese bureaucratism, were too sharp to permit any lasting compromise.

In the north, then, we see Kublai waging war against the very people of the steppes from whom he had sprung. South and overseas his reign was marked by colonial wars carried on in the interests of Chinese glory. It seems to have been his intention, in spite of a professed dislike of violence, to reduce all the peripheral kingdoms to a condition of dependence on China as overlord. Recognition of this relationship, symbolized by the offering of tribute, was demanded at one time or another from Burma, from Annam and Champa in present-day Vietnam, and from Java, and in the east, from Japan. Tribute missions were indeed sent to Tatu from some of these kingdoms, including Annam, but they did not save the Mongol armies from some spectacular defeats during their continued campaigns. Invasion fleets sent to Japan between 1274 and 1281 were virtually annihilated, though it is true that their loss was due as much to unlucky storms as to Japanese resistance. Kublai planned further invasions for 1282 and

1285. But military catastrophes in the south compelled him to call off the Japanese venture and by the end of his reign it was clear that Mongol expansion had reached its zenith.

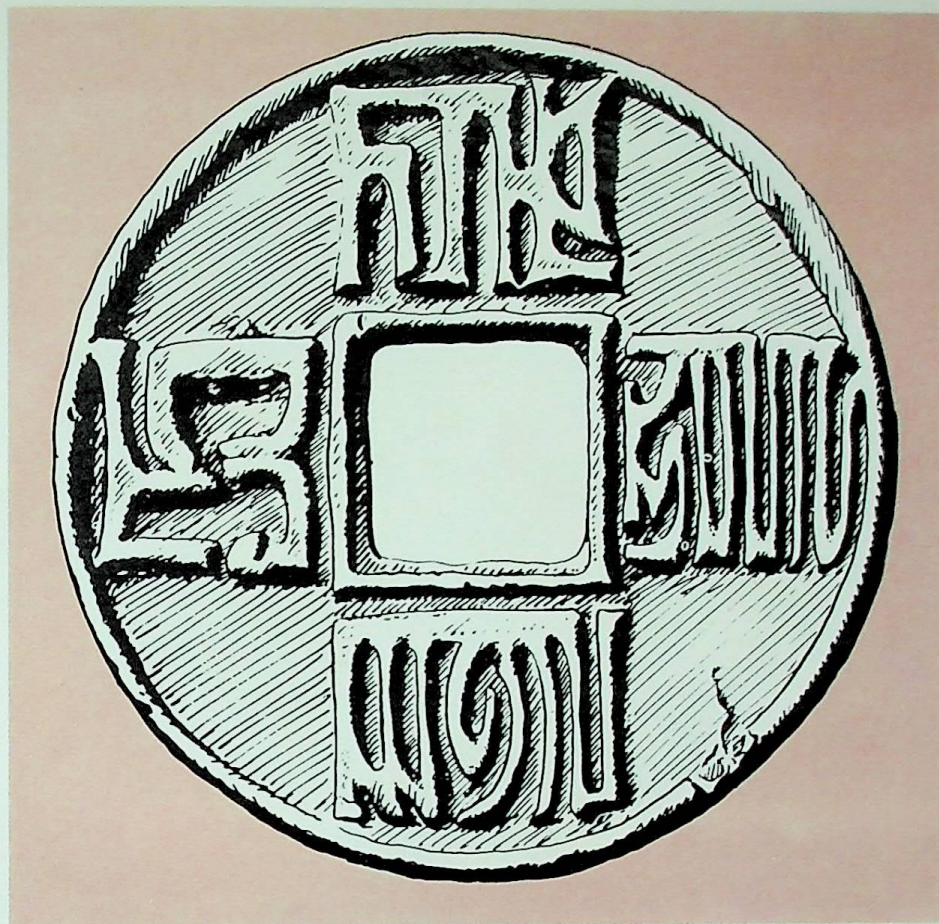
The rift in imperial unity

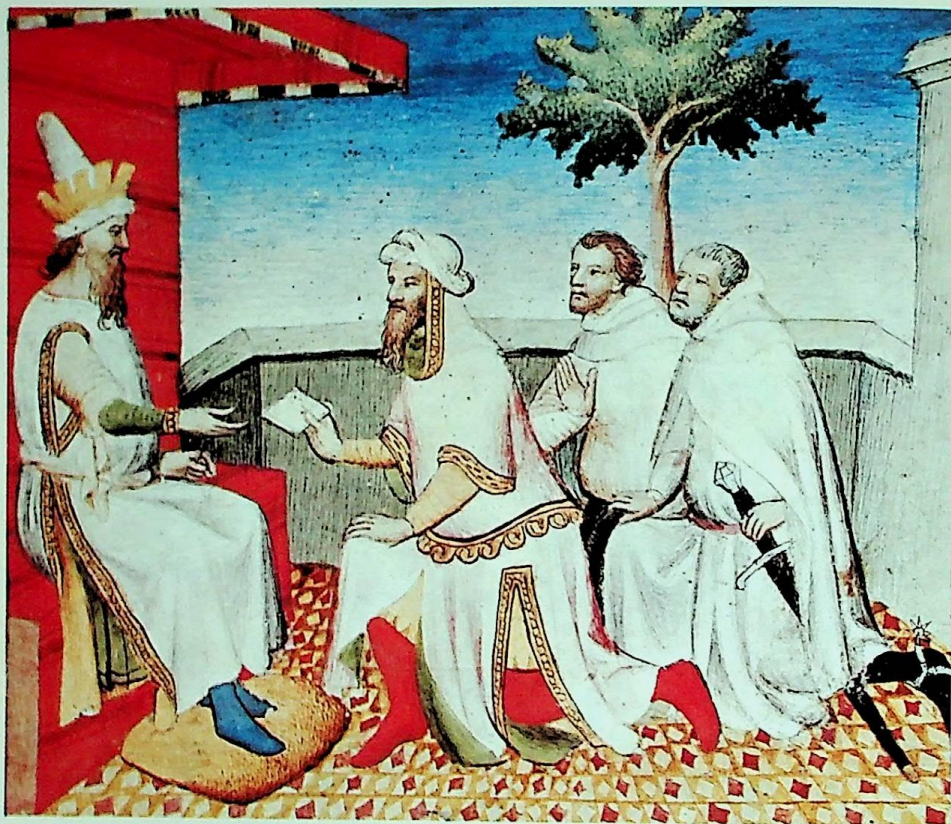
From a present-day vantage point Kublai's reign can be seen as a watershed in the history of the Mongols. It marks the point at which further military conquests began to be unprofitable or even impossible to achieve, and the point at which imperial unity was beginning to crack. The outlying areas, the Golden Horde in southern Russia, the realm of the Ilkhans in Persia, and the central khanate were all pursuing their own interests, interests which were different because of the great distances involved and, after the conversion of the Ilkhans to Islam, because of religious incompatibility. The emperor in Tatu could not expect to maintain unitary control over all Central and East Asia.

Perched high on a cliff, Kublai's Mongol archers attack a Japanese fort. But his expeditions against Japan between 1274 and 1281 were disastrous, and his armies virtually annihilated.

Yet to the people of his time Kublai's reign must have seemed a period of solid expansion and fulfilment, above all in commercial matters, rather as Queen Victoria's reign appeared to most Englishmen of the late nineteenth century. The colonial wars were probably only a minor irritant; the Mongols had pacified all Asia, and for the brief years of the 'Mongol Peace' it was, allegedly, possible for a maiden with a nugget of gold on her head to travel the whole empire in safety. Kublai extended the system of post roads throughout Asia; he repaired the Grand Canal which joined south and north China and made it easy to provision the north; and the use of paper money, which he promoted, at first favoured the expansion of trade, though naturally it tended to produce inflation, too. Merchants travelled freely from the Crimea to the Pacific.

A unique source of information about the life and times of Kublai Khan is the famous book by the Venetian traveller Marco Polo, who spent 17 years in China. To Marco, Kublai was the greatest of rulers, 'for in respect to number of subjects, extent of territory, and amount of revenue, he surpasses every sovereign that has heretofore been or that now is in the world; nor has any other been served with such implicit obedience by those whom he governs'.

Under Kublai, religious tolerance prevailed in China. Probably from indifference rather than out of conviction, strange religions were not persecuted. As far as government was concerned, Kublai followed the principles of Confucianism, but personally he leaned very much towards Buddhism, especially in its Tibetan form of Lamaism. He even appointed a Tibetan lama, the famous Phagspa Lama who is remembered for having invented a new script for the Mongol language, as national preceptor, or superior, of all the Buddhists

A cast bronze coin inscribed in the Phagspa script, the new Mongol alphabet devised for Kublai by the Tibetan lama Phagspa, and used for official documents, inscriptions and coins.

of the empire. Buddhists and Moslems, Nestorians and Roman Catholics were all welcome. Monasteries and churches were exempt from taxes provided they reciprocated by praying for the emperor's welfare. Again, probably from an innate distrust of the Chinese whose culture he nevertheless admired, Kublai generally employed foreigners in the higher ranks of his administration. But he allowed the examination system, under which civil servants were selected on the basis of their Confucian learning, to lapse, and as a result, the Mongol emperors lost the support of the intellectuals, while the restraint which the scholars had traditionally exerted on tendencies towards absolutism was relaxed. New classes, especially a class of mercantile specula-

Seated on his throne, Kublai presents Marco Polo with tablets of authority for his travels in China. Not unnaturally, the marvels Marco reported were scorned as the tales of a romancer.

tors, whose emergence had previously been checked, grew up as a result of the temporary weakness of the scholar class, and the fact that many of these speculators were foreigners tended to alienate the ordinary people from the ruling house. Moreover, the population was divided into four classes with graded privileges. The two higher classes of Mongols and other foreigners, the lower classes of Chinese in north and south China respectively.

Thus, in spite of the evident prosperity of China under Kublai's rule, the seeds of disaffection and rebellion were present. When he died in 1294, Kublai left the empire at the peak of its power and glory. He had managed to unite all China for the first time for over 300 years under one central government. Trade and manufactures flourished as never before. But his achievement rested mainly on the force of his own personality. His successors were lesser men, and they could not for long maintain the rule of an alien minority. Little more than 70 years after Kublai's death his dynasty, the Mongols, their foreign allies, and Christian communities, were swept away by a patriotic, nationalistic Chinese rebellion.

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